



jeervadhara

RELIGION AND HISTORY

Edited by

John B. Chethimattam

PROCESSED

MAR 11 2003

GTU LIBRARY

JEEVADHARA

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

GENERAL EDITOR
Joseph Constantine Manalel

SECTION EDITORS

The Human Problem

Felix Wilfred

C. Thomas Abraham

The Word of God

Augustine Mulloor

Mathew Variamattom

The Living Christ

Sebastian Painadath

Jose Panthackal

The People of God

Kuncheria Pathil

George Karakunnel

The Meeting of Religions

John. B. Chethimattam

P. T. Mathew

The Fulness of Life

John Padipurackal

Mathew Paikada

Manager: Jose Pollayil

SECTIONAL BOARD OF EDITORS

Thomas Manickam

Thomas Manninezhath

John Peter Muriangathery

Joseph Manickam

EDITOR - BOOK REVIEW

J. B. Chethimattam

jeevadhara

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Religion and History

Edited by:

John B. Chethimattam

Jeevadhara

Malloosery P.O.,
Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel: (91) (481) 392530

E-mail: ktm-jeeva123@sancharnet.in

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	347
History and Religion	349
<i>John B. Chethimattam</i>	
Christian Understanding of History	363
<i>Francis Thonippara</i>	
Dynamics of History in the Evolution of Islam	376
<i>James Narithookil</i>	
History as Revelation	384
<i>A. M. Mundadan</i>	
'Revisiting' the Hebrew Historiography	406
<i>Antony Kalliath</i>	

Editorial

A major difficulty in entering into serious dialogue with Asian religions is a certain lack of sense of history on their part. Though some of them like Buddhism and Jainism arose in particular moments of history they attach importance not to the persons who started them but only to the doctrines they proposed. Buddha was just a paragon of human being who reached illumination on the transitory character of all things falling in our experience, leading only to craving and suffering. Buddha is what everyone ought to be. Jainism placed stress on the liberation of consciousness from all its limitations, and Vardhamana Mahavira was one of the *tirthankaras* path finders showing the way to the rest of humanity. Hinduism was *sanatana dharma*, a body of doctrines without any single founder or any definite organizational structure, aiming solely at *moksa*, escape from the cycle of births and deaths in bodily existence. But the problem is that one can reach this total release of consciousness from its restraining boundaries only by going through those same limited experiences. Similarly *nirvana* can be attained only through the eightfold path that takes seriously the world of experience.

Today with the close co-existence of different religions and philosophical traditions in a world grown small through media explosion, time and history have gained great importance. People attach great significance to the originating events of each religion. With thousands of new religious movements appearing in each of the main-stream religions emphasizing one or other of its foundational texts, or significant personalities, or particular points of doctrine calling for immediate action, the question "why?" of every point of controversy looms large. Every particular event or detail of practice demands justification in terms of the fundamental texts of the religion concerned. A deeper explanation of everything in the world of appearance seems to lie in the world of essences. Wisdom can claim to explain the incomprehensible in a particular human or race through appeal to human nature itself or in

conjunction with certain universal laws. Hegel's was the most grandiose plan to explain every detail of history as the manifestation of an all-embracing rational spirit. But a sign of its total failure was that it left no place for human creativity and freedom. If *karma* is the inexorable moral system no individual would have a way to escape it, and God presiding over the whole universe of beings would have no role other than that of a silent witness of what cannot in any way be affected or regulated.

History is of utmost importance to both Islam and Christianity. Muslims trace their religious history from the revelation of Qu'ran, the Law of God to Mohammed, a law that is a living guide for all actions in everyday living. For Christianity, human salvation was effected by the Son of God becoming a human being as Jesus of Nazareth undergoing suffering and death, and though his resurrection he was constituted the one in whom all humans can become sons and daughters of God. Without this abiding presence of this Risen Lord in the heart of everyone faith itself has no value or credibility. Though faith is the common factor that unites all believers, the different roles assigned to time and history make its actual expression radically different from religion to religion.

History explodes the oft repeated idea that all religions are the same or that they are all equal. They do not agree even on the idea of religion or salvation. Most religions agree on God-realization as their goal. But there are religions people like Buddhists who reject if such a view were attributed to them. Similarly rejected by history is that one religion is the fulfillment of another. Jews will not admit that Christianity is their fulfillment or Buddhists that they are built on the foundation of Hinduism. What stands out in history is that religions are complementary, and that they exist by the will of God in the one history of humanity. Dialogue among them is a conversation that is meant to be overheard so that each one can understand how God speaks to him or her through the other's faith. Its scope is to help people of different faiths to see God's historic project of creating the Kingdom of truth and make people collaborate with everyone to promote human concerns.

So we devote this issue of *Jeevadhara* to articles that describe certain fundamental aspects of the religions' approach to history.

John B. Chethimattam

History and Religion

John B. Chethimattam

In the Axial period between 800 BCE and 200 CE with the development of logic and metaphysics world religions went their separate ways in the conception of the Deity, developing their separate traditions. Though they interacted with each other to a certain extent they have remained imprisoned in their separate identities, with their separate Scriptures, different attitudes to worldly prosperity, and historically conditioned moral systems and distinctive conception of salvation within the one salvation history of humanity. But their positions are not contradictory but complementary.

Religion is a human phenomenon. Though it deals with God and realities above and beyond the boundaries of nature, the focus is on their meaning for human life. As the astronauts traveling into outer space were able to look back to earth and see it as a single globe, today in the third millennium humanity has reached an adult consciousness to see human history as one and look at the different religions as integral parts of our common pilgrimage to eternity.

The parting of Ways

Karl Jaspers in his book *The Origin and Goal of History*¹ speaks of the Axial period between BCE 800 and CE 200, during which with the evolution of metaphysical thinking different traditions went their separate ways creating religions radically opposed to each other. This division was mostly with regard to the problems they emphasized, the vision of the Deity they entertained and the distinct philosophical methods they employed. As leaders of this movement of divergence there arose Lao-tze and Confucius in China, and the Upanishadic sages as well as the founders of Buddhism and Jainism, Buddha and Mahavira in India. There

appeared Zoroaster in Persia, the Prophets Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah and finally Jesus in Israel, and Plato and Aristotle in Greece. For the Greeks, who started with wonder at the phenomena of nature the basic problems were flux and multiplicity of things in the place of unity and stability and the answer to them was an all perfect Immovable Mover behind all things.

The people of the Middle East mostly wandering in caravans in an arid desert, were particularly preoccupied with the problem of evil, how there could be evil in a world created and maintained by a good and all-powerful God. Hence their conception of the ultimate reality was of a good God source of all good arraigned against an ultimate principle of evil, source of all sickness, misery and failure. In this struggle between the forces of good and evil, good alone would succeed in the end, since evil is a negation kept in existence solely by the element of good imprisoned in it. Man had to side with the good God who was conceived very much like those conquering Middle Eastern monarchs establishing a benevolent treaty with the subjugated. Loyalty to him and fidelity to his commands was the duty of obedient human beings. Eastern people, who generally had a fertile earth to supply their material needs, were concerned rather with the meaning of their personal suffering caused by external factors like heat and cold, imagined beings like demons and jealous gods, and by their own inner psychological conflicts. So they thought of the Deity as a sort of original authentic condition like Nature or Heaven or a cosmic Maternal Womb from which all things originally emerged. It was Christianity coming at the end of the Axial Period that tried to reverse the trend towards divergence, emphasizing that all humans are brothers and sisters, children of the one Father in heaven.

This historical evolution of human religions was to a certain extent preceded by and rooted in a cosmic evolution of consciousness as explained by the paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin². According to him human consciousness emerged from an explosion billions of years ago setting in motion an evolution of things. Moving forward in ever greater complexity as well as increasing consciousness it went through the geosphere or the physical universe, then the biosphere or the evolution of life, noos-sphere or emergence of intelligence and finally formation of the human species. Human beings first appeared clustered in families and tribes, forming their own group identity separating themselves from others, thereby creating separate nations and great many cultures. But

the spherical shape of the planet restricts unlimited divergence, and with the communication explosion groups cannot any more remain totally separate.

Development of Traditions

In the course of time each religious tradition has been developing. Actually tradition is the past alive in the present and history is the hermeneutics of tradition. History may proceed by way of an organic evolution. But there are also sudden radical changes as in the barbarian invasion of Europe and the Westernization of Japan. Between the end of World War II and the 1960s there has been a mutation on a global scale. Science, technology, communication and other forces that have been building up for centuries have built up a global matrix for culture. The perspective of historical research as interpretation helps us to retrieve it as a vital force in the present. But it is not a cataloguing of dead events recorded of the past age nor an assembling of lifeless exhibits as if in a museum. As memory and interpretation of the past, history makes available the life force of the tradition, an archetype or primordial dynamic structure of consciousness which establishes our roots in history and links us to the great minds of the past. As Bernard of Chartre stated³ we are dwarfs but stand on the shoulders of giants. Thus for example the whole of Western philosophy has been described as a series of footnotes to Plato. Modern religious thought is greatly based on Scholastic speculation, which in turn is rooted in monastic theology. But the analogy of dwarfs and giants can also be reversed when traditions function as a dead weight obstructing all growth, and their development comes through interpretation that transforms the dark side of traditions. This is particularly apparent in the traditional tutelage of organized religion, which held philosophy and other sciences as mere handmaids, and progress was made only when the various sciences were able to declare their independence from ecclesiastical tradition and formulate their own rules and moral norms. In retrieving the past, interpretation has to be critical and discriminating.

Religious Scriptures

Another source of evolution in religious traditions are the different meanings of the religious texts themselves. Besides the events and truths they refer to in their literal sense, they also represent a symbolic imagination with an allegorical meaning, imply some moral injunctions

and indicate the goal believers have to aim at. As Augustine of Dacia O.P (d 1282) said about the Christian Bible: "Littera gesta docet, quid credis allegoria, quid agis moralis, quo tendis anagogia"⁴ – Words communicate the events, allegory what you have to believe, moral sense what you have to do, and the anagogical, whither you tend. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa* I q I thus explains this fourfold meaning: "That first signification belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal... The spiritual sense is threefold... so far as the things of the Old Law signify things of the New Law there is allegory; so far as things done in Christ or so far as the things which signify Christ, are signs of things we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense". For the Greeks truth was one and immutable and each teacher could only transmit faithfully the ancient text introducing only a "contamination" or minor modification. But for the Hindus Scripture was expression of the ever abiding eternal values in human words expanding them to actual situations according to the context, implications and assumptions and one's own meditation on the text. Hence in the commentaries on the Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads every teacher was expected to add a new dimension to the meaning of the original text.

Interaction among Religions

Besides there has also been a certain amount of interaction between the different religious traditions, with varying degrees of intensity. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three religions born in the Middle East had a certain affinity. Each of them began as a secret ideology centred in the one God, confided as a mystery to its followers against a dominating foreign culture. Its message, however, was intended for all humanity and hence had to be spread with a militant outlook. Each of them was based on a divinely revealed book or collection of books transmitted from generation to generation. Similarly in the East Shintoism, Taoism and Buddhism had a certain similarity in the conception of an incomprehensible and indefinable ultimate Reality which was closer to emptiness and nothingness than to some thing definable or describable. But real interaction between religions has been minimal. Though in the last hundred years or more there has been in the West a great deal of interest in World religions, especially religions of the East like Hinduism and Buddhism, owing to the radical difference

in philosophical outlook and approach the study was mostly superficial, initiated by linguists, carried forward by sociologists and comparative religionists, mostly ending in an outsider's condescending appreciation of another's faith. In studying another's religion one takes one's own religion as the standard, and it is one's own tradition that one studies in the other, though a certain opening up of one's own boundaries inevitably takes place.

But this looks rather strange. As Thomas Aquinas states the doctrinal definitions of churches and councils are evident to God alone, while in the act of faith one really touches God. Faith is God's free gift to all his children without any distinction of caste or creed. Hence a believer is closer in his act of faith to another believer irrespective of his/her religion, than to the members of his own religious organization, kept together by external factors like a common creed or a commanding authority.. Still the tendency is to consider the members of one's own religious organization united under a common creed as the true believers and all outside that visible organization as "infidels" or "pagans". For example recently the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod of America suspended Rev. David Benke, chairman of the Concordia College in Bronxville for his involvement with "pagans" namely Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Sikhs besides Catholics and other Christian denominations in a nationally televised Sept. 23 prayer service held at Yankee Stadium for the victims of the attack on World Trade Centre.. This was condemned as "syncretism, the mixing of Christian and pagan beliefs and unionism, the blending of biblical Lutheranism with incorrect Christian thinking"⁵. The sponsors of the condemnation could not accept prayer as an act of faith inspired by the Spirit of God, but only as a public declaration of their sectarian creed. In the present day fundamentalist trend every religious group is moving towards an exclusivist position.

Money and Grace

A good example of the influence of history on religion is the changing relationship between money and grace. An ever-recurring question was what sort of connection existed between the two. What does it mean to say that grace has everything to do with money or that money has everything to do with grace? In the Old Testament times Israel felt in its relation to Yahweh as a subjugated people towards a benevolent conqueror who provided security and material affluence as a reward for

its loyalty. Then the statement that grace has everything to do with money meant that the grace of God one has, one's religious standing was an indication of one's economic status. When Israel fell from grace, denied its fidelity to the contractual relation with Yahweh and went after the traditional fertility deities of Palestine, they were conquered by their enemies and led into poverty and captivity. When they repented and abandoned their idols and reaffirmed their loyalty to God, they were freed from their captivity and alien domination and brought back to political freedom and material affluence. This close relation between money and grace characterized the whole history of the Judaic people from their origins at Ur of the Chaldees, journey up north along the Euphrates-Tigris plain, then down the Palestinian coast to Egypt and from there to the Davidic kingdom of Jerusalem, and Solomon's reign. History repeated itself in the Egyptian slavery, in the Babylonian captivity and the domination by the Ptolemies and finally to subjection to Imperial Rome. In all these changes the one religious principle was that fidelity to Yahweh and attainment of divine grace led to political freedom and economic prosperity.

But by the time of Christ the historical situation had radically changed. Under Roman sovereignty the wealth of the whole Mediterranean world was amassed in the hands of barely 5% of the population and 95% was permanently reduced to a hand to mouth existence of extreme poverty. Then a new religious philosophy advocated by the Greek Stoics stated that material poverty was a pre-condition for spiritual health. The Cynics who sold what they owned and threw the money into the ocean in order to seek wisdom for its own sake dramatically proclaimed that money and grace were incompatible. This radical change in world thinking, was introduced into Judeo-Christian perspective when the Gospels proclaimed that the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the persecuted were truly blessed, because they were closer to God and heirs to his kingdom. This brought about a radical attitudinal change since instead of looking at God as a distant sovereign, people were instructed to call him a loving Father in heaven, and in the place of pointing an accusing finger at the foreign overlords, one was asked to direct it back to oneself and repent of one's own sins and love one's enemies. Here the basic religious principle was that the less one depended on material goods, the better one appreciated one's freedom as a child of God.

A similar change took place in Eastern religions too. In defining the goals of life Hinduism had assigned priority to *artha*, wealth and *kama*, pleasure, though both had to be governed by *dharma*, rules of morality. One who could not earn his living by acquiring material wealth and maintain a family of wife and children, could not be a decent human being. Only in the end came *moksha*, liberation from this worldly existence of ignorance and suffering. This was the right attitude as long as people were new settlers in the naturally fertile Indo-Gangetic Plain. But once people settled down in villages and towns and natural resources ran out, the difference between rich and poor, between the ruling classes and agricultural and menial workers sharpened. Buddhism and Jainism indicated a new historical phase when wealth ceased to be a definitive marker for authentic religion. In its place conscious renunciation of the power that money brought became the mark of true religiosity. In the place of the four goals of life, wealth, pleasure, justice and liberation, the four Noble Truths of Buddhism stated that life is suffering, that suffering came out of craving, that it could be prevented through a life that focused attention on spiritual values such as right thinking and one-pointed self orientation. Then *sanyasa*, a life of voluntary renunciation became the supreme ideal of religion.

The same alternation of the two perspectives appear also in Europe. From the birth of the state church with the conversion of Constantine, power, privilege and success were often taken as signs of God's grace. The spread of Christianity embracing the whole old Roman Empire mostly owing to the sword of dictators like Emperor Theodosius was counted as a divine miracle. But after the break up of Roman and Byzantine empires there started a protest movement within the church against the lax living of the politically privileged clergy. Good many embraced a life of asceticism and devotion in the desert as anchorites and monks publicly professing poverty, chastity and obedience. But eventually the same monks stepping into the vacuum created by the disappearance of the Roman rule became dominant economic forces. Then arose the Mendicant orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans to emphasize poverty as a basic religious ideal in their commitment to solve a particular evil that arose as a result of human greed in the well structured society of kings, nobles and ordinary citizens. But the emergence of the class of merchants, the bourgeoisie, who challenged the power of kings and nobles created an atmosphere of material

affluence and individual freedom... Though the Protestant revolution was initiated by monks like Martin Luther, eventually it sponsored capitalism and individual freedom to seek material wealth, and in its religious version eliminated completely the institution of monks. As Max Weber has explained the "Protestant Principle" was that if one succeeded materially it was a sign that one had done something right and merited God's blessing. This religious outlook led to great freedom for individual initiative, to the discovery of the New World and the European colonial expansion to America and the East. Later it led to scientific and industrial revolutions, which brought in unlimited wealth. Shifting from dependence on human labour to machines led to manifold increase in productivity. The steam engine improved travel both on land and by sea. But science and technology could not progress indefinitely and had great many undesirable side-effects which eventually produced the French Revolution and the Marxist Revolution. Protestant denominations like Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists with a Puritan and Calvinist religious outlook challenged the claims of unlimited progress. Today in the postmodern era, when the old claims of modernity for unlimited progress are generally discredited religious thinking has come to appreciate the equality of all human beings irrespective of their material wealth has come to occupy the central stage.

Historical Evolution of Morality

A very significant impact of history on religion was in the area of morality. In the beginning religion and ethics functioned as independent systems. The *Mimamsakas* of Hinduism recognized a system of eternal values that all including the gods had to recognize and respect. Religion dealt with salvation, liberation from the present existence of ignorance and suffering, and it was achieved mostly by knowledge about one's own identity. Morality had to be taken into account only when humans had to deal with each other. Morality developed as a requirement of social life. According to *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Dharma, the god of morality, was produced by Prajapati, the creator, in order to keep peace among the different classes of people. In the early stages of human development religion and ethics existed side by side. As religious thought and ethics advanced through a method of transcendence over the empirical side of life, recognition of an ultimate Reality and of a moral

code came to be linked closer together. On the other hand, when it was felt that basic values of human conduct such as respect for rights of the poorer sections of society were being violated in the name of religion there was an attempt to dissociate the two. In Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro* Socrates asks Euthyphro, who in the name of piety to the gods files a case against his own father for abetting the murder of slave, whether something was good simply because the gods commanded it or the gods commanded it because it was good. Both Buddhism and Jainism arose as protest movements against the abuses of Hindu religion and were essentially moral systems looking for a path of liberation from the present state of human suffering, without recognizing any personal Deity. In Greece also moral systems arose independent of any God, while most primitive religions had no moral concern, but were preoccupied with placating the gods and avoiding divine wrath. Plato defined his moral system on the lines of the inner rules of a republic, taking the human soul as the miniature of a state. In it the various human faculties had to be subordinated and coordinated with the will as a guardian who had to be guided by Good, the sun of the moral universe. Aristotle had his whole *Nichomachean Ethics* centred on the quest for happiness, and the practice of virtues. Stoicism an ethical system, later substantially taken over by early Christian thinkers, evolved independently of any religious considerations.

But the growth of social life in the direction of greater refinement brought in the sense of the need for a cosmic lawgiver who saw to the enforcement of moral laws by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. Hinduism first relied on the law of *karma*, that human actions produced their own fruits in another life in a series of births, deaths and re-births. So there were white actions that produced good results and black ones that automatically led to punishment. One could escape this life of bodily existence only through totally disinterested actions, acts that were neither white nor black, similar to those of priests offering sacrifice or of God creating the world. But this was seen as an impossible ideal, that at times the balance was tilted heavily in the direction of evil. So, as the *Bhagavad Gita* states, an extraordinary divine intervention by way of an *avatar* or incarnation was called for, in order to protect the righteous, to punish the wicked and to restore morality by setting forth a model for all to follow.. Scripture itself is not an impersonal code of moral conduct, but the words of a personal God addressed to human

beings. Only by realizing God as the Self of one's own self, could one get beyond the different layers of ethical existence, the bodily, biological, psychological, rational and spiritual, could one reach the ultimate goal of religion.

Greek and Indian religious thinkers started with abstract ideas of being, good, truth, consciousness and the like and by removing all limitations from these concepts which by themselves did not imply any limitation, they ended their religious quest with an impersonal Deity who was Supreme Being or pure infinite immutable Consciousness. It is rather difficult to make out whether Parmenides's idea of pure Being or Sankara's Advaitic consciousness are intuitive experience of reality or mere projections of mental concepts. Hebrews, on the other hand, projected to their Deity human relations such as between father and children and master and slaves. So religious relationship was moral from the very beginning. Yahweh, the "Creator of heaven and earth", created all things including humans "in the Beginning" as the first installment of a contractual relationship, so that rational human beings were obliged to fulfill their part of the deal, detailed in the do's don'ts of the Decalogue. Even though the moral regulations detailed in the books of the Bible were often taken from the political manuals of the time like the Laws of Hamurabi, they were introduced by Moses and the Jewish legislators with the introduction: "Thus says the Lord". So even the laws inherent in the nature of things got their binding character from the will of God. Things commanded were good not in themselves but by the will of God who created them. All natural laws derived their force from divine law.

Jesus brought a new dimension to morality. He demanded more than what Moses had asked for, since through history people had matured and developed. The conquests of Alexander and especially the *Pax Romana* had established a community of all the known world. Calling all children of the one Father in heaven, Jesus invited all to holiness in imitation of the holiness of God himself: "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). He declared love the fundamental law of life, a "new commandment:" "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:34-35). In the "Sermon on the Mount" the Gospel of Matthew gives us seven contrasts between the Old Law and the New. The Old was not abrogated but rather had to be completed by the New

(Mat 5:17-48). Love had to embrace all: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you... Do good, lend without expecting repayment (Lk 6:27-28.35). The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) gave a model of such love not from the clannish community of the Jews but from the despised aliens. The norm for the final judgment will be the love or lack of it towards the least and the poorest (Matt 25:31-46). The reason for this law of love is religious: "We love because God first loved us. If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we see" (1Jn 4:19-20).

Today the basic dynamism for moral life is provided by Faith, God's free gift to all his children. Through faith one surrenders oneself to God and to his children the fellow human beings. This faith is lived out by love as the supreme law of human life. Today the dominant moral consideration is not avoidance of sin and the emphasis placed on particular precepts as obliging under grievous sin, but rather how a particular line of action fit in with one's commitment to love others as oneself. To help the man of faith to understand what is pleasing to God and helpful to his neighbour, there is an inner guidance provided by the indwelling Spirit of God. It is in the service of one another in love that the human community grows. In this emphasis on love all religions of humanity has drawn closer to each other.

Religions and the One History of Human Salvation

The central problem in the discussion between history and religion is how the many religions come within the one religious history of humanity. Since every religion is conditioned by its own socio-cultural and political situation at a particular moment in time, no single religion can claim to speak for the whole humanity. On the other hand, every religion claimed to present a message of salvation valid for all humans and some of them tried to impose with military zeal its message on every one as the only truth. Besides history and salvation history form a single theme. But most religions in antiquity were not historically conscious. Events of particular experience were passing phenomena and rational beings tended to go beyond them to the abstract ideas they represented. Though the early Greek religions were connected to particular deities and their worship tied to particular places, when logical

and metaphysical thinking emerged there arose a variety of abstract religious thinking like the Pythagorean idea of transmigration of souls, the Parmenidean mysticism, the Orphic Mystery cult and the Olympian pantheon, all of which had very little to do with history. Similarly Hinduism claimed to be *sanatana-dharma*, a religion without a beginning or founder or history, though down the centuries it went through good many radical transformations. Time was only a shadow of eternity and history was mere mythology.

But in the East history came to have significance when Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, Sakyamuni and Vardhamana Mahavira challenged the Hindu tradition through their new religious movements, Buddhism and Jainism. Buddha's illumination under the bodhi tree came at a particular moment in time and by his disclosure of the Four Noble Truths he was said to set the Wheel of Dharma in motion for all humanity. Buddhism as a religion cannot be understood without the event of his illumination and the three baskets of his teaching handed down from generation to generation of his disciples. But the problem with referring solely to the transcendental or ontological plane of meaning is that we will miss what is unique and unrepeatable in experience. So Judaism, Islam and Christianity which saw human salvation in a personal and direct encounter with God put great emphasis on God's intervention in human history. They placed great importance in history. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the mythological ancestors of Judaism were significant by their intimate personal relation with Yahweh. Abram was called by God to move out of his paternal home on a long journey with the promise that he would be the father of a people as numerous as the sands on the seashore. Jacob was one who in a dream wrestled with the angel and received the title of "Israel", one who prevailed against God. Israel's escape from Egypt and liberation from the Babylonian captivity presented on the lines of creation's emergence from the primeval chaos by the creative act of God, were all unique events that served as models for humanity's salvation from the bondage of sin and suffering. For Islam Mohammed's *hijra* or departure from Mecca and the revelation of the Qur'an by angel Gabriel were decisive events.

The Persons of Christ, the Norm of History

History is of utmost importance for Christianity. In fact, an understanding of history gained by the Disciples' experience of the death

and resurrection of Jesus is the unique contribution of Christianity to a proper understanding of salvation history. Christ is the Son of God eternally generated from the Father, identical in essence with the Father and the Spirit and at the same time in his created existence as Jesus of Nazareth the model of what all creation should be. The Son can do nothing of himself (Jn 5: 19, 30). He cannot speak on his own authority (Jn 7:17; 12:49; 14:10). As pure subsistent relation of sonship from the paternity of the Father he receives from him life, spirit, word, will and doctrine. Son's form of existence as Son is uninterrupted reception of everything from eternity. Though as man he has his own will (Jn 5:21; 17:24; 21:22) his task is to present a model for all creation to follow in fulfilling the will of the Creator. "It is the will of him who sent me, not my own will, that I have come down from heaven to do" (Jn 6:38). The meaning of the incarnation is to manifest his eternal mission as begotten in a form conformed to this world. Incarnation is not a change in God but what happens in Jesus actualizing in him the Person of the Son. He does not anticipate the will of the Father but waits for his "hour". This is right the opposite of what happens in human sin when the creature sets himself as an absolute without waiting for the will of the Father. This refusal of anticipation is identical in meaning with the assent to the Holy Spirit, by whom the will of the Father is manifested: Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God (Rom 8:14). Jesus conformed to the person of the Logos is the point at which time enters eternity and in a way eternity enters time. The purpose of the incarnation is not to confirm humans in their isolation from God nor to repair the human and to restore them to paradise but to gather all beings in time in the eternity of the Son and to fulfill the original intentions of creation. Only an understanding of time as manifested in Jesus of Nazareth, his life, suffering and resurrection, can give us a proper understanding of eternity.

Creation has no existence independent of the eternity of God. As all admit time is only a shadow of eternity. Christ's mode of time is that he renounces all sovereignty over his own existence. Christ's obedience to the Father embraces also the horizontal dimension of historical development. As he states he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets so that the human history as a whole has meaning in the salvific plan of the Father (Matt. 5:1; Jn 5:39; Mk 12:35-; Lk 4:16).

Conclusion

In a way time and history provide the common background against which all religions can show their complementary role in the one salvation history of humanity. All of them including their founders show their complementary contributions in accomplishing God's will in the present world. For Buddhism all phenomenal existence is pure emptiness having no substance behind them. In the Hindu perspective the eternal, infinite and immutable divine consciousness is the sole reality and the world of time is really unreal, only a shadow having only a practical value. In Judaism the whole world and human fellowship is the field where God encounters humans and rules and guides them through what he said and did in human history. For Christianity the historical life of Jesus, his suffering, death and resurrection and continued presence in the hearts of humans is related to the whole of history giving it ultimate norm and meaning. It is not the Divine Logos but the incarnate Son "who is before all and at the end of all, who underwent death and is now alive" (Apos 2:8). "In him we were chosen out before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). Jesus marks the culmination of the world-venture to lead all things back to God, the Creator. These different views of time and history can be seen as different dimensions of the one and same emergence of beings from their original source and their final return to their origin.

San Thome Catholic Centre
Kanyakumari - 629 702
Tamilnadu

Foot Notes

1. Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung and Ziel der Geschichte*, Zurich: Artemis, 1949, trs. Micael Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1953.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trs. Bernard Wall, New York: Harper & Row, 1965
3. Quoted by John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon III*, PL 199, col 900.
4. Quoted in New Catholic Encyclopedia in "Exegesis Medieval"
5. *The Journal News*, July 23, 02.

Christian Understanding of History

Francis Thonippara

The Christian understanding of history is at the heart of Christianity and is an integral part of Christian faith. The Christian view of history is not merely derived from a philosophical reflection of historical events. The heart of the understanding is not a set of ideas, but a person. Christians believe that the centre of world history is the earthly life, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him God entered history decisively to forgive and save humanity. God is the Lord of history.

Introduction

The achievements and self-assessment of the Second Vatican Council, the challenging decisions of the World Council of Churches, the fall of Communism in Russia and in Eastern Europe, the fall of Berlin Wall and the consequent formation of a united Germany etc., are the results of changed views of history in relation to truth. Christianity being a historical religion, its sense of history is very strong from its very inception. The Acts of the Apostles is the typical example of the interest the early Christians had in history. With the Jerusalem Council and through the efforts of St. Paul, Christianity assumed a universal outlook.

It is not an easy task to narrate the Christian view of history. Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century wrote the first history of the church and thus he came to be known as the father of Church History. From that time we have scientific writing of history of the church. However, there is no single view held by all Christians with the Christian name. There are a number of views, related but contradictory, emerged in the course of time.

Different Christian Views

Going through the various authors of recent times, we see differences of views. Christopher Dawson, a Catholic, surveys the development of a Christian view of history from Israel to Christ and Paul, to Augustine, Bede and Dante. For him "the Church holds the secret of history and human redemption"¹.

Kenneth Scott Latourette approaches history in an evangelistic way. He asserts the "sovereignty of God, the Incarnation of Christ, the universality of outlook, the motive of love and the fellowship of the people of God"². Reinhold Niebuhr speaks of the seeming absurdity and the ultimate wisdom of faith in Christ as the end of history and the fulfilment of life's meaning. Christian view of history portrays time as moving from a beginning toward a goal, a fulfilment. In this it differs radically from Greek and Oriental ideas of time. "With Christ's Incarnation God Himself has entered this circular time at a certain point, and with His whole weight of eternity has stretched out this time-circle and given the time-line a beginning and an end, and so a direction. Eternity entered time and revealed that time is meaningful, although not the last word. Consequently, Christian hope is not bound to time, but transcends it"³.

Pannenberg stresses the continuity of universal history, which joins the history of Israel and Jesus with our own history. Gustavo Gutierrez, the liberation theologian from Peru, is disturbed by any suggestion of disjuncture between salvation and ordinary history. His conviction is that history is one: "... there are not two histories, one profane and one sacred, 'juxtaposed' or 'closely linked'. Rather there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history. His redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their fullness. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history"⁴.

Arnold Toynbee in 1920s felt that western civilization could well be in an advanced stage of breakdown. He believed that something could be done to renew western civilization. "The cue for salvation may still be given us by the message of Christianity and the other higher religions"⁵. Christianity is the answer for the western civilization. According to Hubert Bufferfield "history is the result of human decisions and actions which are taken in freedom and for which people are held responsible. History can be seen as the action of the providence of God

“in whom we live and move and have our being”⁶. Karl Barth stresses the primacy of God. He speaks of the glory of God and the history of God’s glory “takes place in, with and under the history of creation”. C. S. Lewis believes that the human history is a story written by the finger of God. He indirectly questions the Christian view of history of Augustine and Dante.

The World Council of Churches has the following to say: “God is present in human history. He is present in a hidden way. Even the forces, which resist Him, serve his purposes. At the same time He is not present as an anonymous God. He has a name. ‘Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself, God of Israel, the saviour’ (Is 45:15). This saviour name is the key to our understanding of nature and history. And in God’s saving history man is called to partake”⁷.

An analysis of the Christian View of History

The Western world divided time into B. C and A. D and this division, acceptable to all till recently, shows the influence of Christian religion on history. Opponents of this division may argue that it is the result of the Christian dominance over the world. This division shows the mind of the early Christians the decisive role of the Christ event in world history.

We can understand history in different ways: all that happened in the past, records of the past, or humans acting as subjects. History may be viewed as “the totality of human events in the past, present and future, as governed by God and directed towards His goal”⁸. The Christian conception of history was plainly not the result of any systematic process of reasoning. As questions arose out of the circumstances of the Church’s continued existence in time, so the Church was induced to work out its own idea of the history of salvation. The theology of history became possible only when Christianity had become aware of the fact of its own duration, and enucleated the inner significance of that fact”⁹.

Credit goes to St. Augustine who was the first Christian thinker to deal with the problem of how the Christian must look upon history. According to him, ‘History is neither a deterministic nor a meaningless chaos ... There is a decisiveness and unpredictability about history which is falsely annihilated in any view of history as mechanical recurrence, scientifically intelligible and predictable’¹⁰.

Christian understanding of history is different from other views. For example, the Persian dualism implies separate origins of good and evil.

According to this concept, God is not sovereign in history, since he has not created the whole universe. On the other hand Christians believe that God is the creator of the universe and rules throughout all its vast reaches. This means that the human lives and history takes place in a universe, that all of reality is one and the same, is part and parcel of the far larger unity of God's creation.

The Christian understanding of history is at the very heart of Christianity and is an integral part of Christian faith. Those who reject the concept of revelation automatically reject the Christian view of history as well. Thus the Christian view of history is not merely an element derived by philosophical reflection from the study of history. What makes Christian view of history different from other views is the fact that the Christian understanding of history centres upon historical occurrences. The heart of this understanding is not a set of ideas, but a person. The Christians believe that the centre of world history is the earthly life, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him God entered history decisively to judge and to forgive ... God is the Lord of history.

To a Christian, the reckoning of time is inherent in history. In Jesus of Nazareth, God once for all disclosed himself and acted decisively. In Jesus the Word – God – became flesh. Thus with the Incarnation the Kingdom of God began in a fresh way. The purpose of God in history is that men shall be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29) ¹¹.

God is sovereign in the affairs of humans. Humans are created in the likeness of God with the possibility of fellowship with God. Human-kind is one and history embraces all and is universal. In creating the human in his own image, God gave a certain measure of his own free will. Although limited, human freedom is real. Whether within or beyond time, God's will is to be accomplished and his sovereignty will have to prevail.

‘The Christian understanding of history is determined by a series of divine operations. These operations lead to different developments and events, which are of different nature. These events and developments, are the further expressions of God's designs and their actualization and fulfilment of human life’ ¹². The Christian must recognize the leadership of Jesus Christ over history. He is active today inspite of all ambiguities of political, economic or social structures.

There are people who have a pessimistic approach to human nature and blame the whole world as corrupt. They have complete distrust of human deeds and wish for the intervention of God for the accomplishment of his purposes. However, there are others whose deeper trust in humans, in their abilities and potentialities, will see God dependent on human efforts to bring about the kingdom of God ¹³.

‘The uniqueness of a Christian view of history lies in the Incarnation of Christ that central belief which makes Christianity the historical religion *par excellence*. Through the Incarnation God affirms humanity, the world and history” ¹⁴. The following elements are important in the Christian understanding of history.

Incarnation

Incarnation is the unique divine event which gives spiritual unity to the whole historic process of the human race. Incarnation is the central event of the world history. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is not simply a theophany, a revelation of God to humans; it is a new creation, the introduction of a new spiritual principle which gradually leavens and transforms human nature into something new. The history of the human race hinges on this unique divine event which gives spiritual unity to the whole historic process. First there is the history of the old dispensation which is the story of the providential preparation of the humankind for the Incarnation at the “fullness of time”, to use Paul’s expression. Secondly, there is the New Dispensation, which is reaping the fruits of the Incarnation in the life of the Church and world. And finally, there is the realization of the divine purpose in future in the final establishment of the kingdom of God. Thus the Christian concept of history is essentially unitary. It has a beginning, an interval and an end. This beginning, this interval and this end in a sense transcend history, they are not historical events in the ordinary sense of the word, but acts of divine creation to which the whole process of history is subordinate. For the Christian view of history is an interpretation of time in terms of eternity and of human events in the light of divine revelation. And thus Christian history is inevitably apocalyptic, and the apocalypse is the Christian substitute for the secular philosophies of history ¹⁵.

The central point of Christian belief in the understanding of history is that God intervenes in the life of humankind at definite points in time and place through direct action. It is not a mere belief in the direction of

history by divine providence. "The doctrine of the Incarnation which is the central doctrine of the Christian faith is also the centre of history and thus it is natural and appropriate that our traditional Christian history formed in a chronological system which makes the year of the incarnation as its point of reference and reckons its annals backwards and forwards from this fixed centre"¹⁶. The Christians hold that in Jesus of Nazareth God once for all disclosed Himself and acted decisively. In and through Jesus God revealed Himself fully and showed the humans what God expects from them.

Kingdom of God

The central theme of Jesus' preaching was the kingdom of heaven or Kingdom of God. It is precisely the doing of God's will. In the beautiful prayer he has taught us, we pray: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven". Among Christians lot of discussions are going on even after two thousand years when and how that petition is answered. Some Protestants of the 19th century held that the Kingdom of God will come within history when God's will is accomplished through the cooperation of humans and by slow stages. 'The opposite view has been held that the world is becoming no better, and indeed, may even be deteriorating, and that God by his own unaided act will bring history to a sudden dramatic end and will then accomplish His perfect will'¹⁷.

Christians believe that God's will will triumph. God's will is to be accomplished and His sovereignty will prevail. In Jesus the eternal word which is God became flesh. So in Jesus God's kingdom began in a fresh way. The purpose of God in history is that men shall be 'conformed to the image of His Son' (Rom 8:29).

There are some who hold that Jesus himself expected this consummation very soon. Throughout the centuries some Christians believed that the end of history was imminent. Even today there are people who believe the same. There are people who identify the kingdom of God with the Church. However, some do not agree.

From the beginning, Christian view of history has embraced all humans. The disciples were commanded to be 'witnesses' 'unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8), baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus had commanded his original followers (Mtt. 28:19-20).

“The Christian understanding of history goes on to say that following the crucifixion and resurrection God continues to operate through the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit humans can be remade and can enter the radiant, eternal life, which from the beginning was God’s plan for humans. Those who have that life are characterized by faith, hope and especially love, the kind of love which is of the same nature of God. They have a fellowship, the church, which takes a visible form within history but which is never completely identical with any historic expression and continues beyond history. The course of history is God’s search for the human. God is judge, but he judges them that he may save and transform them ¹⁸.

Eschatology

Eschatology is another feature of the Christian view of history. The Christian view of history is co-existence with time. It covers the whole life of humanity in this planet and it ends only with the end of this world and of human temporal existence. It is essentially a theory of the interpretation of time and eternity so that the essential meaning of history is to be found in the growth of seed of eternity in the womb of time. The end of history is the creation of a new humanity, or rather a humanity, which goes far beyond as the human goes beyond the animals¹⁹.

“A special characteristic of the outlook of history is its eschatological quality: the idea of an end is of capital importance in the system from three distinct points of view: First history is not conceived as an indefinite progress, but as finite in scope; it is a determinate, circumscribed design, called by the Fathers of the Church as the cosmic week, which is to be followed by the eighth day, representing the life of the world to come; Secondly, Christ professedly comes ‘late in time’ and inaugurates the stage that will not pass away. So there is nothing beyond Christianity. It is indeed the last thing. And it is the everlasting juvenescence of the world, which makes everything else obsolete; thirdly the end of history has already taken place, because the Incarnation and the ascension of Christ fulfil its purpose”²⁰.

Thus the Christian mission gives substance and consistency to the history of our era.

There are events which happen beyond history. And this gives relevance to the developments of life on earth. Since humans are created

in the image and likeness of God, their lives within history is incomplete and they have a longing for something beyond. This longing "cannot be satisfied in the brief span of existence of individuals in the flesh. The Christian view of history regards what is beyond physical death as essential to the realization of human capacities and holds out confident hope of that fulfilment. This is apocalypticism and eschatology"²¹.

Christians give full weight to the unknown and unpredictable in history. The meaning of history is a mystery, which can be understood only in the light of faith. Christians hold that God acts in history. However, one must go beyond the events, with which the historian deals and even beyond what is still to occur in time in order completely to see God's dealings with the human. Christianity centres upon events in time and also transcends them.

Holy Spirit

Christian understanding of history presupposes the working of the Holy Spirit. Christians strongly believe that the church, which is the continuation of the Incarnate Word in the Holy Spirit. The ups and downs, failures and victories, joys and sorrows, agonies and ecstasies, strength and weakness are to be properly understood and judged only in the context of the belief of the working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit to His followers. The Christians get strength from the working of the Holy Spirit.

In the lives of the saints we see history transcending itself and becoming part of the eternal world of faith. Christians not only believe in the existence of a divine plan in history, they believe in the existence of a human society, which is in some measure aware of this plan and capable of cooperating with it. Christians live witness to the transforming love of God. This transforming love of God is made visible to us through Jesus Christ. It is also lived by individuals and collective movements. These movements are led by the Holy Spirit. "The Christian understanding of history is that it is through the Holy Spirit which is God Himself that God continues to work in history. It is through the Holy Spirit that as the centuries pass the influence of Jesus grows rather than wanes"²².

The Christian view of history implies also an element of progress. This element of progress is noticed in history and in the development of dogmas. The Christian criteria for measuring process is a unique one --

growth in the likeness of God as God reveals himself in Jesus Christ. The meaning of history is to be found in the apparently insignificant development of the people of God.

Christian Historian

The Christian historian should be aware of creation values which are the complete reverse of the so-called generally accepted and esteemed values. He must focus on acts and events which would normally receive no attention. The typical examples are in the Bible (Jn. 3:3-5; Mtt. 16: 23; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Is 55:8; 1 Cor. 1:20). The Christian historian must give great importance to the individual (Lk 15:3-6; 11-24; Mtt. 19:30; Lk. 17:20-21). The individual is to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world' (Mtt 5:13-14). The meaning of history is to be found in the apparently insignificant development of the people of God. The Christian historians must be aware that 'there are certain Christian convictions and beliefs about Christianity which cannot be tested and proved by applying the normal historical criteria. As for example, the historian can neither absolutely prove or disprove that God created the human in his own image. God cannot be fully known within history'²³.

Christian understanding of History through Centuries

According to St. Augustine, the history of the City of God, which coincides, with the history of the church, is antagonistic to the history of the City of Satan, which corresponds to the political history²⁴.

St. Augustine holds that the Christian interpretation of history follows the pattern, which had already been laid down in the Old Testament and in the Jewish tradition. There is a sacred history. There is the interpretation of external history in the light of this central history. Successive ages and successive empires had a role to play in the divine drama. Each world empire had a divine task to perform and once the task was fulfilled, they disappeared.

This view had its classical expression in St. Augustine's work *The City of God*, which interprets the course of universal history as an unceasing conflict between two dynamic principles embodied in two societies and social orders. The city of men and the City of God, Babylon and Jerusalem, which run their course side by side, intermingling with one another and showing the same temporal goods and the same temporal evils, but separated from one another by an infinite spiritual self. Thus

St. Augustine sees history as the meeting point of time and eternity. St. Augustine's judgement on secular history is a predominantly pessimistic one which sees the kingdom of this world as grounded in injustices and expending itself by war and oppression ²⁵.

St Augustine believes that the whole course of history without grace is a record of successive attempts to build towers of Babel. These attempts are frustrated by the selfishness of human nature. On the other hand, in the city of God, love has the unifying power, which enter all humans of good will. There is an eternal fellowship which is progressively realized in the course of the ages.

Although St. Augustine was not a historian as Eusebius, his work had great influence on western thought. "In the first place, he impressed upon Christian historians his conception of history as a dynamic process in which the divine purpose is realized. Secondly he made men realize the way in which the individual personality is the source and centre of this dynamic process. And finally, he made the western church conscious of its historical mission and its social and political responsibilities so that it became during the following centuries the active principle of western culture" ²⁶.

In the medieval thought, time and eternity are closely bound up with one another. "The world of history was only a fraction of the real world and it was surrounded on every side by the eternal world..." ²⁷. This finds its classical expression in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Dante's view of the Empire is entirely opposed to that of St. Augustine. He regards it not as the work of human pride and ambition but as a holy city specially created and ordained by God as the instrument of his divine purpose for the human race" ²⁸. The statesmen could not have achieved their purpose without a special infusion of divine grace.

The promoters of renaissance and humanist culture idealized the classical antiquity. This view changed the traditional western view of history and a new type of historiography was inaugurated. The religious approach to history as the story of God's dealings with humankind and the fulfilment of the divine plan in the life of the church was abandoned or left to the ecclesiastical historians and there developed a new secular history modelled on Livy and Tacitus and a new type of historical biography influenced by Plutarch. Thus the unity of the medieval conception of history was lost ²⁹.

Hegel and Hobbes tried to interpret in non-moral terms and started studying history in a scientific way. In the 19th century, especially with the reign of Pope Pius IX there emerged a triumphant attitude from the part of the church. But with the Second Vatican Council the church became more realistic and matter of fact. The church became more and more aware of the pluralistic realities of the world and traditional triumphalism shed. Second Vatican Council was an occasion for the Catholic church to evaluate herself and get out of the feelings of self-complacency. The pastoral constitution on the *Church in the modern World* begins with the idea of the solidarity of the church with human-kind and it's history (No. 1). Man is the centre and crown of the universe (No. 2). Coming forth from the eternal father's love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world. But this is already present in this world, and is composed of men, that is of members of the earthly city who have a call to the family of God's children during the present history of the human race, and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns (No. 40). 'While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the church has a single intention, that God's kingdom come, and that the salvation of the whole human race come to pass. For every benefit which the people of God during it's earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is 'universal sacrament of salvation', simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love for man" (No 45).

Therefore, the council focusses its attention on the world, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives. It gazes upon that world which is the theatre of its history, and carries the marks of its energies, tragedies, and triumphs: (No. 2).

Conclusion

Our very existence is in history. It is our creative cradle and meaningful matrix. We are an integral part of history, we are history. Rooted in time and incarnate in matter, we are also makers of history. Our thoughts and actions, omissions and commissions, our very being, incessantly contribute towards the making of history that we live. We must constantly become creative participants in the making of history. Hence our approach to history must be one of involvement and insertion

of duty and responsibility. The Word Incarnate is the typical example for all Christians in their involvement in history. Thus the historian must be an active parttaker in the making of history. It is our history and we have to write and rewrite it ceaselessly. Christian view of history is optimistic and strongly rooted in the working of the Holy Spirit, challenging each individual in every moment of his/her life. Thus we have holy people like Francis of Assisi, Clare and in our own times Mother Teresa of Kolkatta. The individual filled with Spirit changes the flow of history. 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev.22:20) is the prayer that is echoed throughout the Christian centuries.

Dharmaram College

Bangalore – 560 029

Foot Notes

1. *God, History and Historians*, McIntire C. T. (ed.,) New York 1977, p. 28.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 328.
8. *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, C. T. (ed.,) New York, 1977, p. 304.
9. Danielou Jean, *The Lord of History*, London, 1958, p. 20.
10. The Works of a Christian Historian, Harbison Harris, E. in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, C. T. (ed.,) New York, 1977, p. 338.
11. The Christian understanding of History, Latourette Kenneth Scott, in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, (ed.,) New York, 1977, p. 52.
12. Danielou Jean, *The Lord of History*, London, 1958, p. 1.
13. Latourette Kenneth Scott, "The Christian Understanding of History in God" in *God, History and Historians*, (ed.,) by McIntire, C. T., New York, 1977, p. 51.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
15. The Christian View of the History, Dawson Christopher in *God, History and Historians*, C. T. McIntire (ed.) p. 32.

16. Dawson Christopher, The Christian View of History, in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire C. T. (ed.) New York, 1977, p. 31.
17. Latourette Kenneth Scott, The Christian Understanding of History by, in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, (ed.) New York, 1977, p. 51.
18. Ibid., p. 54.
19. The Christian View of History, Dawson Christopher in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, C. T. (ed.) New York, 1977, 43.
20. Danielou Jean, *The Lord of History*, London, 1958, p. 7.
21. "Christian Understanding of History", Latourette Kenneth in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire C. T. (ed.) New York, 1977, pp. 60-61.
22. The Christian Understanding of History, Latourette Kenneth Scott, in *God, History and Historians*, McIntire, C. T. (ed.) New York, 1977, p. 65.
23. Christian Understanding of History, Latourette Kenneth Scott, p. 59.
24. Danielou Jean, *The Lord of History*, London, 1958, p. 19.
25. Dawson Christopher, 'The Christian View of History', in *God, History and Historians* McIntire C. T. (ed.) New York, 1977, p. 35.
26. Ibid., p. 37.
27. Ibid., p. 39.
28. Ibid., p. 39.
29. Ibid., p. 40.

Dynamics of History in the Evolution of Islam

James Narithookil

Islam grew and developed and became one of the major World Religions because it had the dynamics of history and felt the pulse of the people at Mecca, the crossroads of North-South and East-West trade. It identified itself with the cultures and concerns of the people it conquered. It declined not owing to external forces but through lack of sensitivity to history.

Islam views its history as identical with that of humanity extending from Adam to Noah, to Abraham to Moses, to Jesus to Muhammad, with the potential for a Muslim empire embracing the whole world and history. Even in periods of decline owing to various reasons, it dreamt of an eventual restoration. It was in this perspective that *jihad* was undertaken against the Europeans, by the South East Asian Muslims against the Dutch, and against various other peoples in various parts of the world. The development of Muslims presents a definite pattern of historical dynamism embracing different factors.

The Pre-History of Islam is the history of central Afro-Eurasia from the Hammurabi of Babylon to Cyrus II of Persia, to Alexander the Great to the Sasanian emperor Nashiran to Mohammad in Arabia. It was impelled by the emergence in the Axial Age of religions, the Abrahamic strand of the Hebrews, the Mazdean focused on the Iranian deity Ahuramazda and Christianity. The formation of Islam was facilitated by the expansion of trade from Eastern Asia to the Mediterranean and

the consequent political changes. Muslims were in a certain sense also heirs to ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Indians and Greeks.

Islam, one of the Semitic religions, was born and grew in a Semitic culture and environment. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (570-632 AD) migrated from Mekkah to Medina in 622 AD. which marks the beginning of the Islamic era (Hijrah). Islam, though the youngest of the three monotheistic Semitic religions, has become the second largest world religion during the 1389 years. The immediate cause that brought about the phenomenon of Islam was the coalition of Arab groups both inside and outside the Arabian peninsula. They were able to seize political power and gain economic control of the lands west of the Nile up to river Oxus. This was a territory controlled formerly by the Byzantines in the West and the Sasanians in the East. They had two confessional religious traditions, the Hebrew and the Mazdean, both shaped by the mercantile style of life the people led, demanding a special concern for fairness, honesty, covenant-keeping and discipline. Their god was a unique, all powerful creator who remained active in history and demanded exclusive loyalty from the people. But when the nomadic tribes settled down and developed agriculture, the power of the tribes was enhanced against the imperial authorities. But the Arab state inspired by Muhammad's revelations rose not among these settled tribes but among the independent Arabs living in Mecca, at the cross-roads between north-south and east-west. Though Mecca had enough spring water and well water for the camels passing through the routes, it did not have enough water for agriculture. There grew up a society that was different from that of Beduins and other settled down Arabs. There grew up a market society with a famous shrine dedicated to the Seven Daughters of God, visited by people from far and wide. It developed from a worship different from that of the confessional style of Hebrews and Sassanids. It was an unaffiliated monotheism, which distanced itself from the traditional polytheistic religion of Mecca, without embracing, however, Judaism or Christianity. Then an attempt to effect a supra-tribal association combining prophetism and messengership replacing the blood relationship of the tribe with the bond of faith and a militant zeal for God was natural. But the only individual who succeeded in this venture was Muhammad ibn Abd Allah of the clan of Quareysh. What helped him was his ability to

articulate an ideology that could appeal to several groups in the actual situation striving to form a single community.

The Dynamism of the Ummah: Growing up as an orphan left under the tutelage of his uncle Muhammad was married to Khadijah, a rich widow much older than himself. Spending much time in the mountains in solitary prayer he had a vision of Angel Gabriel who forced him to repeat the words: "Recite: In the name of God the merciful and compassionate. Recite: And your Lord is most Generous. He teaches by the pen, teaches man what he knew not." Though the Arabs had many other intermediaries with the sacred like kings with priestly functions, tribal leaders and specialists, the power of the recited word had a preeminence. The poet's words were compared to arrows that could wound the unprotected enemy. So Muhammad's words as of a divine messenger had a greater appeal than that of traditional priests. Weakening kinship ties and encouraging social diversity attracted followers for Muhammad from different social groups. In fact it was the rejection of Muhammad by people of his own clan, as well as by Jews and Christians that forged his followers into a new religious community, the *Umma*, capable of incorporating ultimately its own opponents with a higher motivation. It was in this situation that Medina, which could not resolve the conflicts among its social groups invited Muhammad as a neutral outside arbiter. At this time Muhammad adopted for his community the second title of *Muslims*, people who showed the right relation to God by surrender to his will. They became Muhammad's Umma by accepting him as the sole Emissary of God (Rasul Allah) over against those who rejected him. They prayed facing Jerusalem from where Muhammad in a vision ascended to heaven to converse with God, Abraham, Noah, Moses, David and Jesus. But when the Jews rejected him the Muslims were directed to pray facing Mecca, the centre of divine revelations to Muhammad. He further strengthened the social bond by instituting *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and fasting during the month of Ramadan, as distinctive cultic acts.

The watershed of Islamic expansion was not merely the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphs by the Abbasids, but the historical transformation of Islam from a small Arab ruling class to a world culture and the dominant faith of a vast empire stretching from western Mediterranean to central Asia. And it was not only an empire that the Arabs built but a

culture as well. They absorbed and assimilated the Greco-Roman culture and subsequently acted as a medium for transmitting to medieval Europe many intellectual influences. Ultimately it resulted in the awakening of the western world and setting it on the road towards its modern renaissance. No people in the Middle Ages contributed to human progress so much as did the Arabians and the Arabic speaking peoples¹. Arab cultures intermingled with the cultures of the conquered to produce Islam's fundamental orientations and high culture, though the Arabs remained a small minority. In the same way as Muhammad fulfilled and redirected the ongoing tendencies among the Arabs, the creators of the early Islamic civilization carried forward and transformed the developments in the Roman and Sasanian territories they first dominated. As long as Muhammad lived he performed the functions of prophet, lawgiver, religious leader, chief judge, commander of the army and civil head of the state - all in one. He was succeeded by four orthodox Caliphs in succession: (1) Abu Bakr (632-34), Umar (634-44), Uthman (644-56) and Ali (656-61). The golden rule of these four rightly guided caliphs was followed by the Umayyad dynasty (661-750). During the reigns of al-Walid and Hisham the Islam empire reached its greatest expansion, stretching from the shores of the Atlantic ocean and Perenees to the Indus and the confines of China. They chose as leaders of the Islamic movement people experienced in trade, commerce and warfare and imbued with the Islamic ideology which gave a cosmic significance to their endeavours. Umar assuming the title of "Commander of the faithful" linked organizational activism with faithfulness of the Muslim. Within 25 years the Muslim Arab forces had created an empire that permanently linked western Asia with the Mediterranean thus surpassing the achievements of Alexander the Great.

Muslim historians retrospectively indicate four conflicts or temptations that beset the Islamic world after the death by assassination of Uthman, the successor of Umar. In the first two conflicts the claimants to the caliphate relied on local support and brought the military effort to focus on rivalries among Arab families. Different regions supported different claimants and new tribal divisions appeared in garrison towns. Syncretic, anti-Islamic religious movements emerged weakening the

1. 'Arabian' means an inhabitant of the peninsula (Arabia), 'Arab' means any Arabic speaking person, particularly a Muslim

Muslim religious thrust. The growing opposition to the existing order of things culminated in the third conflict, which resulted in the establishment of a new and final dynasty of Caliphs, the Abbasids, who were kin, but not descendants of Muhammad. The opposition party of the Shia'h broke away from the people of the Sunnah. The Sunnies were the historicists, claiming to follow the sunnah of Muhammad and emphasizing the principle of solidarity, while the Shiites placed emphasis on direct descent from Muhammad. The Abbasid's policies allowed the emergence of the Shariah, an independent body of law, which Muslims could use to evaluate and circumvent the caliphate itself. This brought about the fourth conflict, which culminated in the division of the Islamic empire at the death of Caliph Harun al-Rashid.

Shariya and the Sunnah of Muhammad continued to hold the Muslim world together. But there was need to defend the sacredness of Qur'an through recourse to Greek philosophy. Different opposing groups emerged. Still, Islam as a world religion spread to Spain, Egypt and other countries. From the 18th century Muslim Empire declined not particularly on account of external forces but mostly owing to the failure of Muslims to keep abreast of history. When the world social system broke the 5000 year limitations of the agrarian based settled world Muslims stuck to the old system. Europeans adopted and surpassed Muslim seafaring technology and brought the Muslim countries under their control.

This era witnessed the rationalizing or Arabicising of the administration, the introduction of the first purely Arab coinage, monuments as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem - the third holiest sanctuary of Islam. The Arabicization of the state under 'Abd-al-Malik and al-Walid consisted in changing the language of the public registers from Greek to Arabic in Damascus and from Pahalawi to Arabic in Iraq. Abd-al-Malik struck at Damscus in 695 the first gold dinars and silver dirhams which were purely Arabic. Besides these, he developed a regular postal service using relays of horses for the conveyance of travelers and dispatches between Damascus and provincial capital. The administrative divisions of the empire in Umayyed and even Abbasid times corresponded to the provinces of the Byzantine and Persian empires. The Umayyed army was modeled in its general organization after that of the Byzantines.

The invaders from the desert brought with them no tradition of learning, no heritage of culture to the lands they conquered. They sat as pupils at the feet of the people they subdued. An Arab henceforth became one who professed Islam and spoke and wrote the Arabic language regardless of his racial affiliation. This is one of the most significant facts in the history of Islamic civilization.

Arab historiography started in the form of tradition (hadith). It was one of the earliest disciplines cultivated by the Arab Muslims. One of the principal agents through whom Christian lore and Greek thought found their way into Islam was St. John of Damascus surnamed chrysorrhoas (golden tongued). Although he wrote in Greek John was not a Greek but a Syrian who spoke Aramaic at home and knew Arabic.

History and legend united in placing the most brilliant period of Baghdad during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid (786-809). Baghdad had by that time grown from nothingness to a world centre of wealth and international significance, standing alone as the rival of Byzantium.

Philosophy: In essence their philosophy was Greek, modified by the thought of the conquered peoples and by other eastern influences. The harmonization of Greek philosophy with Islam begun by al-Kindi (801-873) and Arb, was continued by al-Farabi (870-950), a Turk and completed in the East by ibn-Sina (Aicenna 980-1037) a Persian.

Historiography

The majority of the earliest of historical writings surviving the Arabic, date from the Abbhasid – period. The first work based upon religious traditions was the biography of the Prophet by Muhammad ibn-Ishaq of Madinah. Then came works dealing with the early wars and conquests of Islam.

Al-Tabari (838-923) wrote an elaborate and accurate history (Annals of the apostles and kings) as well as a commentary on the Qur'an. His monumental work on universal history, the first complete one in the Arabic tongue, served as a source for later historians. Muslims contributed remarkably in diverse areas of learning. The great philosopher Al-Farabi was a Muslim; the great mathematicians Abu Kamil and Ibrahim ibn Sinan were Muslims, the great geographer and encyclopaedist al-Masudi was a Muslim, the great historian al-Tabari was a Muslim.

Modern Islam

Nationalism, apologetics and dynamism are the three outstanding new tendencies of modern Islam.

Nationalism: A great deal of the energy of the entire Islamic world has been devoted to the long struggle to oust foreign domination. There is much in common between the Muslim nationalist movements and those of India, China and the like. One of the fundamental considerations of nationalism was the drive to eject alien control. It is part and parcel of Islam's modern resurgence. Examples of religious figures inciting local nationalism are Jamalu-d-Din Afshani in Afghanistan, Muhammed Abdu in Egypt, the Deobaid and Abu-l-Kalam Azad in India and Ahmad Dakhlan in Indonesia. Wherever nationalism has been adopted in the Muslim world and in whatever form the 'nation' concerned has been a Muslim group.

Apologetics: It is an endeavour to prove to oneself and to others that Islam is sound. Most books and speeches on the faith by those within it today are defensive. Much of the apologetic literature is addressed at least formally to the West. The 'defense of Islam is roughly against unbelief, against attack, against westernization. Throughout the Muslim world a great deal of the energy of thinking of Muslims has been directed to the intellectual defense of their traditional faith in the modern world.

Dynamism: Dynamism is the third new element in modern Islam. It is the appreciation of activity for its own sake, and at the level of feeling a stirring of intense, even violent, emotionalism. The need and value of this kind of dynamic in a Muslim world that had become passive and inert are apparent. Of late this dynamism has combined with other elements in the modern Islamic situation. It has the dream and drive of renewing Islamic glory and reinstating once again on earth the proud society of Islamic divine prescription.

The dynamism is combined also with frustration, because of the growing and bitter disillusionments over the desperate inability of liberalism and secularism. The result has been that a growing number of Muslims have been turning to a series of movements, in some cases of fanatical outbursts. Among these dynamic elements there has been growing at times a violent fury that rejoices in destruction, a bitter opposition to the West, to non-Muslims. Yet for their violence and fury their own Muslim governments have had to support them.

We have seen Islam entering on the modern period of its earthly history at a low ebb and frightened by outside attack. We have seen them successfully reasserting their independence in national movements and defending their faith in intellectual endeavour.

Conclusion

Though religion is about God great part of it is about man, who is a being set in history. As long as religions listened to the call of history in giving concrete expression to their faith they were successful. But when they got stuck in the past without heeding to the signs of the times they declined. Islam is the best example of the dynamics of history radically influencing the development and decline of a religion. Muhammad was successful as a religious leader when he responded to the people of the Arab world seeking freedom from the three political powers surrounding them, the Byzantines, the Sassanids and the Africans. Raising the Arab tribes to an international awareness in the name of faith in God, the Islamic movement was able to supplant all the three. As long as the Caliphs following him kept to the path of cultural transformation and faith expression outlined by the Prophet they were able to establish a world empire. But when they gave in to local squabbles the rest of the world caught up with them and dominated them. A mere appeal to a glorious past and frantic efforts to retrieve the splendour of the past by irrational violence cannot succeed.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore

History as Revelation

A. M. Mundadan

Christianity is unique in its relation to history. It is centred upon the historical person of Jesus. The source and fulfilment of history is that it reveals the saving Word of God. History is not concerned with facts alone, but rather with the meaning of the facts, which brings the whole creation to its fulfilment. History and its progress is in the process of what Teilhard de Chardin calls Christification, leading all things to the Omega Point, in which all distinction between sacred history and secular history vanishes.

Christianity, it is claimed, is unique in its relation to history. Reinold Niebuhr has expressed this idea strongly in a few statements. On the one hand, he asserts that 'the Christian faith is centred upon one who was born in a manger and who died upon the Cross; the Christian faith begins with, and is founded upon, the affirmation that the life, death and resurrection of Christ represent an event in history, in and through which a disclosure of the whole meaning of history occurs'. On the other hand, though he holds that 'the centre, source and fulfilment of history lies beyond history', he insists that 'the Incarnation in which is involved the whole character of Christian religion, declares that an event in history can be of such a character as to reveal the character of history itself; without such a revelation the character of history cannot be known, nor can we understand the meaning of life and history without it' (Niebuhr 1937:x).

These statements of Niebuhr seem to convey two ideas: 'first, Christianity is a historical religion and is centred on a historical event/events; secondly, history gets its full meaning from a Christian

perspective, when it sees history originating from, and culminating in God who communicates himself to man in and through time. History thus becomes a self-communication of God in time and space. Because of God's revelatory action, history assumes a similar nature. It is precisely this idea we are trying to discuss in this paper: How, and how far, is history revelation? Our attempt pre-supposes some understanding of history and revelation.

What is History?

History has been variously understood down the ages. The eighteenth and nineteenth century rationalistic and 'scientific' approach to reality produced what is called a 'positivist' conception of history. It affirmed that the historian's task was to produce 'facts' as such and to establish their rather external interconnection. The real interpretation of history was relegated to other sciences, like theology, philosophy and social science (cf. Richardson 1964:155).

But the Romantic influence of the nineteenth century slowly asserted itself and a more wholesome outlook on history came to prevail, at least in the twentieth century. As a result, today, history in its full sense could never be concerned with facts alone; it has to be interpretation too (cf. Casserly 1965:3). People became sceptical about the possibility of a purely positivistic history. Every age (even historians, like Ranke, who had a reputation for their absolute detachment) has its own 'myth' or interpretation to give to history (cf. Richardson 1964: 17ff). The so-called positivist historian who is concerned only with bare facts without any interpretation, hardly ever exists; but it is probable that beneath the academic interest, there often lurks a deep concern for the present, which redeems historical research from irrelevance and triviality. In the last analysis it would generally be conceded that nothing can be '*historisch*' (merely historical) without being in some way '*geschichtlich*' (significantly historical); no facts can be 'mere facts', and every fact that can be discovered is worth discovering, because all history is somehow significant (cf. Ibid:155).

The trend of contemporary thinking about history seems to be against making a distinction between 'facts' and 'faith', or between history and interpretation. It appears to be widely accepted that there are no such things as 'bare facts', and that history is, from first to last, interpretation. Benedetto Croce and Collingwood have offered such a view (cf.

Collingwood 1946: 282-315). It may be objected that they are harbouring illicit and idealistic notions. But Carl Becker cannot be (cf. Becker 1910:106) accused of cherishing any ulterior ambitions as a philosopher. He was pre-eminently the historian for whom history was 'just history' and nothing else. He is highly critical of the generally accepted view that history is a jumble of facts and interpretation.

What we want to emphasize is that history is to a large extent interpretation, interpretation from specific vantage points. It is these vantage points (the 'myth' of an age, or a group, or an individual), which give a specific character to the history of an age, distinguish it from that of another, which tell one type of history from another. One such vantage point is the religious perspective. It gives rise to a unique form of history, the religious history, which may be broadly defined as the interpretation of historical facts in the light of man's relationship with God. It is the oldest and the newest of its kind. In every age one can observe man's inner urge to discover the manifestation of a superhuman power in the daily occurrence as well as the rare incidents. This urge helped to formulate the structure and system of a total religious history. This way, history or events are looked upon as communication of God to man and man's response to God, as the rendezvous of 'two self-gifts, with all the struggle between good and evil, morality and immorality, and so on'. History, in this sense, is what happens between God and man, as the Jewish theologian, Martin Buber, once said (cf. Dimont 1962:21). It is man's self understanding before God, if at all history is man's own life of self understanding'. (cf. Collingwood 1946:314).

What is Revelation?

Almost all religions have entertained some idea about revelation. But the understanding of revelation differs in different religions. We may classify all the different views broadly under two classes. According to the first, 'revelation is the inspiration given to holy men to reveal supernatural truths through infallible oracles. Here revelation is the manifestation of some truths' (cf. Casserly 1965:3). As an example, one might adduce the primitive Greek religion. The ancient Greeks maintained revelation as the divine prediction through oracles. The Indian concept also does not appear to be much different. The *Sruti* is the uncreated word of God that is communicated to mankind through the enlightened mind of the *Rishis*. But this was never the concept of

revelation in Christianity, although the Christian understanding was to some extent influenced by this idea till about the middle of this century.

The other class subscribes to the view that revelation is the intervention of God in history to communicate. Himself to man through words and actions (cf. *Ibid.*). This is exactly the Christian concept of revelation at least according to modern theology. The Protestant theologian Barr writes: "Revelation through history is the conventional wisdom of modern theology. Historians of theology in a future age will look back on the mid-twentieth century, and call it the revelation-in-history period". (J. Barr 1964:61f). This existential and personalistic idea of revelation gained greater momentum with Vatican II, which recast the ancient definition of revelation.

This point needs further clarification. We should remember that revealing acts do not constitute full revelation. To be revelation these acts are to be interpreted by the human mind, aided by the Spirit of God, as divine revelation. When man comes to know what the events mean, then it is history. When the meaning of these events is interpreted as a communicated relation between God and man it is revelation. In other words, as mere events alone do not constitute history, they also do not become revelation by themselves. For revelation presupposes the acceptance of the same by man. That is why Casserley writes: "If there is any stage in the communication, in which we have mere events without interpretation, it is merely a conjectured stage, in which revelation is held to be revelation, before it has in fact revealed anything... What is experience, before anyone has experienced it?" (Casserly 1965:3). Dr. Temple adds: "The principle of revelation is the co-incidence of event and interpretation. Before we come to appreciate the event, though revelatory in its own character, it is not yet fully revelation. Even if no one had recognized Christ, the incarnation would have occurred, but it would have failed to effect a revelation of God" (*ibid*:7).

History as Revelation: Two Perspectives

The consideration of history as revelation is very much dependent upon how one understands history and revelation. If revelation is accepted merely as manifestation of truth without any regard for historical events, history can hardly be thought of as revelation. But, if revelation happens in and through historical events, history easily becomes revelation; historical events are revelatory events. Even more important

is the way in which history is conceived. There have been various approaches to history, in successive ages and among different peoples. Two typically opposite tendencies are those of the classical Greeks and of the Hebrews (cf. Richardson 1964: 54-82)¹; these two approaches in a way set patterns for later approaches as well. One type of approach to history makes it difficult to consider history as revelation; while the other type renders such a consideration quite plausible. The Christian attitude to history in the ancient period, from Iraeneus to Augustine, and up till the early Middle Ages, follows in general the biblical or Hebrew approach. The High Middle Ages, influenced as it was to a large extent by the Greek worldview, show symptoms of a shift towards the classical Greek attitude to history. In the heyday of Rationalism and 'Scienticism' (from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century) it was the fashion to look up to the Greeks (especially Thucydides) as the inventors of the science of history.

What the classical rationalists liked about Thucydides was that he shunned supernatural explanation, at least on the surface of his mind though perhaps not at a deeper level. Thucydides is the most rational of all Greek historians. Beneath his 'scientific' attitude lie the philosophical presuppositions of classical naturalism, that the changeless is the real, that reason is able to detect the abiding patterns amidst the vicissitudes of history, that the circle is the perfect form of the point of origin. It is St. Augustine who dealt a hammer-blow of this view. The rationalists despised the Hebrews because they wrote history unashamedly in terms of their encounter with the will of God in time ('mere theocratic history and myth', as Collingwood states). In our day there is a shift back to a certain appreciation of the Hebrew way of understanding history.

This static view of the Greeks prevented them from regarding history as a source of real knowledge. The Hebrews constantly held that history is the *locus* of all our knowledge, both of God and of man, and that in nature only the 'whisper' of truth concerning our existence was to be heard (Job 26:14). The classical view never developed beyond the identification of man with nature; the historical process was only the human counterpart of the periodic rotation of the heavens or seasons; the repetitive patterns will go on forever, thus making a 'scientific' view of history possible. This pattern is regulated by an ineluctable *nèmesis* (the law of compensation which continually restores the balance of things). It was Herodotus² who conceived this theory of balancing

between the forces of nature and of man. But the Hebrews, unique among the ancient peoples, were aware of themselves having had a beginning as a nation and as having a historical destiny, which was being fulfilled in successive stages'. In ancient Israel historical mindedness was the result of the prophetic awareness of the inevitable accomplishment of the divine purpose in history. This did not depend upon, or was not measurable by, any secular standards of progress (democracy, literacy etc.). The belief in divine purpose makes it impossible for them to accept the unhistorical, the naturalistic attitude of the other ancient peoples. The Greeks are rational. Rationalism in all its forms is fundamentally unhistorical. It looks at history not as the locus of insights into our own existential condition, but as something secondary, a means of corroborating or illustrating generalizations about human nature, which have been derived from other sources (e.g., social sciences and psychology).

In our subsequent analysis of the Old Testament and New Testament ideas of history, of the Fathers and of medieval and modern writers, these two radically opposite approaches to history, based as they are on two opposite world systems, have to be borne in mind. It may be said that in general the classical Greek view is closed to the question whether history is revelatory, but the Hebrew view is open to it.

History as Revelation in the Old Testament

It seems, as already mentioned above, that the Hebrews were the first people to replace a cyclic concept of time with a linear concept. This was possible for them because they recognized God in and through history. They came to know from the experience of certain historical events that history has a beginning from God, and that it tends towards a goal determined by God. With his promise or blessing God gets the movement under way, supervises it, and eventually intervenes when he finds it necessary. This movement, which animates the cosmos, is linear and irreversible. Outside Israel we do not find a firmly established idea of a continuous succession of temporal events, which embraces at once the past, the present and the future and which unfolds in the direction of a goal.

For the biblical man history is the terrain or *locus* of God's self-disclosure. It consists of a series of what Richardson would prefer to call 'disclosure-situations', disclosures of God's designs for Israel (cf.

Richardson 1964:224). The function of history, therefore, is to unfold gradually the plan of God. Consequently, the biblical man always looks forward to its ultimate realization in history itself. The history of Israel may therefore be called a 'revelatory history'. It reveals by actualising the salvific promises of God. The history of Israel is thus salvation-history. "History becomes salvation history not only in the sense of a series of moments of revelation but in the far deeper and more decisive sense that history itself is the realization of salvation and its future, that history itself is a theophany" (Monden 1970:95). Historical events manifest the working of God's salvific designs. "They are signs referring to a meaning which transcends them, a meaning which it unveils but hides, concerning which it speaks and yet is silent" (ibid: 89). Thus the Israelitic history took meaning from this knowledge of God's action in history. History for them is a succession of meaningful moments or *kairoi* chosen by God, and it actualises and reveals his salvific plan.

For Israel this revealing history does not coincide with universal history. It is only a part of it. For revelation progresses little by little, in quantity and quality, through centuries as God intervenes. Still, Israel's history was of profound significance for universal history, because God's revelation to Israel through her history was the light, which was some day to illumine the history of all nations, in every age.

Biblical history is a process or actualisation from promise to fulfilment. This process is set in motion with the promise and blessing given to Abraham; "Go from your country and from your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation; and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen 12:1-3).

It was their subsequent history that gradually revealed to the people of Israel what this promise meant: The meaning of this promise given to Abraham was fully understood by Israel only after the Exodus and Covenant. The Covenant gave meaning to the Exodus itself and constituted Israel as the people of God (Deut. 7:6; 26:17-19), and the entry into the promised land was the culmination of what God had begun in Egypt and the accomplishment of the promise to Abraham. It was history, therefore, that revealed the meaning of the promise by

actualising it. Israel confessed this belief in her creedal statements (Deut. 26:5-9; 6:20-24; Josh 24: 2-13), and in her hymns (Pss. 78, 105, 107, 114, 136).

Israel did not discover God through a process of metaphysical reflection, but through the actions of God in their history. It is the historical experience of Israel that revealed to them the characteristics of God - His righteousness demanding the same from men; His mercy and love, delivering those who put their trust in him; and His justice, punishing those who disobeyed him? (cf. Richardson 1964:223). The deliverance from Egypt and the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan showed them that God is the master of history and peoples; the miracles of Exodus proved that he could mobilize nature according to his will. When the third plague fell upon Egypt, the magicians said: "The finger of God is here" (cf. Exod. 8:19).

Thus all the characteristic biblical beliefs about God's nature and his salvific plan are distillations from Israel's historical experiences. Perhaps nothing miraculous happened which we would today explain away as natural phenomena: But for Israel what happened was miraculous, a disclosure of the divine purpose and an act of divine redemption in the midst of real secular history, so that Israel could say "this is Yahweh's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps. 115:23) (cf. Ibid. 224).

Even the idea that God created the world was an inference from history. It was not an axiom of the Old Testament, but it was a conclusion drawn from the historical experience of Israel. It was history that manifested to them that God was their creator. God's mighty and merciful deliverance of the people from Egypt, the Covenant he made with his people at Sinai, the many victories that he gained over the enemies in the land of Canaan - all these infallibly demonstrated to Israel that YHW is the Lord of nature and history. Although these events, as part of world history, might be quite insignificant, through them Israel experienced YHW's unlimited power over the cosmos. This historical realization of YHW's sovereignty over everything is well expressed in Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Isa. chs. 40-45). All this so convincingly and strongly proved to Israel that YHW is the creator of all. The making of the Covenant was the *kairos* when Israel understood fully the meaning of their existence and their role in the world. It made known to them that they are the

chosen people of God, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (cf. *Exod.* 19:5-6).

The periods of the Judges and the Kings were seen and interpreted by the historians of Israel as part of the actualisation of God's promises. The promise of making them into a big nation was realized under the Kings David and Solomon. The Jahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomic and priestly histories are the interpretations of history in the light of new events.

As history progressed, it unfolded more and more clearly the meaning of the plan of God for man. The Exile was a decisive disclosure-situation for Israel. Although the experience of Israel in exile was a bitter one, slowly they came to realize that in it God was working for their good. The Exile was interpreted as the consequence of their breaking the Covenant with YHW. It was a reminder to them that disobedience to YHW would be met with destruction. The collapse of the nation brought about an intense awareness of the uniqueness of Israel's calling. They understood that they were called to be a worshipping community, a holy people separated from the rest of the nations. This exilic experience spoke to them that the promise given to their forefathers was not to be understood in a material sense but in a spiritual sense. The contact with other nations during exile also awakened a new world-consciousness in them. They realized that they must look beyond their own circumcised community to the whole civilized world if they should behold the glory and majesty of YHW's purpose in history (cf. Anderson 1966: 395f).

For history to become revelation, the events of history need to be interpreted. For the language of history is the language of models, of signs, which needs explanations. The deliverance from Egypt would no doubt be nothing more than a migration of people without Moses' interpretation of it (cf. *Exod.* 14:31;3:79). Prophets were the qualified witnesses and interpreters of Israel's history. They pondered over the events of history and discovered new dimensions. They could read the signs of the times. The destruction of the Monarchy and the Exile were interpreted as signs of God's displeasure with his people (cf. *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel*). They recalled to the people the salvific intention of God, which remained concealed in their history. The return of the exiles and the sayings of the remnant were interpreted as the sign of an eschatological hope for Israel. The notion of the remnant itself was the

fruit of Israel's meditation on her history. For all through her history Israel saw that a remnant was spared (during the bondage in Egypt, sojourn in the desert, wars of conquest, exile). The eschatological vision was possible because Israel knew its God as a living God, who in his holiness does not abandon the world, but goes on working in history. This hope of a future was again a disclosure of history. And eschatology in its turn gave the history of Israel and that of the world a goal, a perspective.

The Psalmist recalls God's deeds in the history of Israel and thanks Him for having manifested His power and saving will through them. He sees all those events as the fulfilment of the salvific promise to Abraham, His servant (Ps. 105:42, cf. also the whole of that Psalm and Ps. 106). Psalms 136 and 138 praise the love and faithfulness of YHW, manifested through his actions in history. The Psalmist referring to the wondrous deeds of YHW, sings: "They shall pour forth the fame of Thy abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud that of Thy righteousness" (Ps. 145:7).

According to the Book of Daniel the various stages of the world's history become a stage in the operation of God's purposes, so that these world stages (past, present, future) themselves become prophetic of a future era, since all are reflected in the eyes of God 'who controls all times and seasons' (Dan 2:21). By this double vision, at once in time and transcending time, the author reveals the prophetic significance of history.

In short, it may be said that the Old Testament consists essentially of a series of reappraisals of Israel's history in the light of new experiences. The events of her history are not isolated, single events, but they constitute a unity. Each historical event sheds light on the past, which necessitates, then, a reappraisal of the past in the light of the new experience. Thus we have a 'new history' of the former prophets, and again a 'new history' of the Deuteronomistic school and afterwards that of the priestly circles. For, new historical developments produced new insights into the relationship of God and man. The most profound of the many re-interpretations of Israel's history is the one that is given to us by the prophets of Exile. A new vision of history was gained in the light of the destruction of the Monarchy and the consequent exile. And the unknown prophet of the return (Deutero-Isaiah) supplies this in its most profound form. Israel's history revealed to him that the disobedient nation

could be reborn only by a new divine act of creation-redemption (cf. Richardson 1964:222).

The New Testament approach to History

History bears within itself the divine promise and brings it to fulfilment (cf. Bonhoeffer 1966:63). The promise of the Messiah was ever present in the history of the chosen people; their history lived in and from this expectation. But the character of the messianic hope was not evident; it is again history, which unfolds it. The historical event of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ revealed what this messianic expectation meant. It gave the ultimate meaning to the salvific history, which started with creation. The Christ event is the mid-point of the long salvific process. It is the central event of history, which illumined all other events of the past and sent its rays to the future. It revealed that the election, covenant and the prophetic hope of a saviour were fulfilled in the midst of a secular history. The mysteries of Christ were *kairoi*, which effected and manifested God's salvific plan. In the very fact of Jesus' appearance and, above all, in his works the Kingdom of God was ushered in (cf. Cullmann 1962:4).

The disciples were unable to give a clear description of Jesus in the beginning. They saw miracles and signs, but they did not clearly decipher the message given to them. It was a disturbing experience for them. But the Easter event shed light on the words and actions of Jesus and clarified their vision of Him. Pentecost was the decisive moment of disclosure. In this light, all the events of Jesus' life received the full meaning. It was the moment of true significance for those who had listened to it in faith (cf. Monden 1970:126 f; Richardson 1964:22). It may be called the shock moment of Pentecostal experience. All the events, which had taken place among them, to which they had been eyewitnesses from the beginning, suddenly ripened into the fullest meaning, into an overwhelming 'Christian revelation' (cf. Richardson *ibid*: 119). Illumined by the Holy Spirit the disciples began their mission of announcing the Good News.

The Pentecostal experience made the first Christians aware that they had been constituted the congregation (the *Kahal*) of the 'New Israel'. Recognition of this status made the disciples know that the last days foretold by the prophets had actually become a reality that they had been assisting at the consummation of Israel's religious history. This

event also opened their minds to the momentous revelation of Christ's divinity and of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Since they realized that the risen Christ had sent the Spirit, they knew that Jesus himself had taken His seat at God's right hand; i.e., He is the Son of God. They realized that the Spirit Whom they knew from the Old Testament was a divine person.

History, as we pointed out earlier, involves a continual process of interpretation and re-interpretation in the light of reflection upon subsequent developments. For these new developments bring to the foreground the elements which were implicit in the original situation and whose meaning could be perceived and understood only in the light of them (cf. *Ibid*: 234). The New Testament is a re-interpretation of Israel's history in the light of a new historical situation brought about by the coming of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:1). Within the very first generation of Christians one can easily observe the process of interpretation and re-interpretation of the Christ-event, continually growing in the light of ever-growing Christian experience. For example, the earliest generation of Christians (Jews and Gentiles) interpreted the life and intentions of Jesus in terms of his imminent return upon the clouds of heaven. This was only an early stage in the development of the Church's historical awareness of the mission of Jesus. This stage had to be surpassed soon. For, in the light of new historical situations a reappraisal of the meaning of the works and words of Jesus was necessary. The four Gospels give similar appraisals of the Christ-event. Historical developments, such as the existence of the Church in Rome and in many cities within and beyond the Roman world, would have brought out the significance of many formerly neglected elements in the works and deeds of Jesus, which could now be understood, because there was a context within which their implication had become obvious (cf. *Ibid*: 236f). The letters of St. Paul are classical examples of such re-interpretations.

The NT history, similar to that of the OT, is only a part of the general history. But this history is able to render a final judgement even on the fact of general history and on the course of events of any period. For Christ is also the meaning and standard of the general history or the so-called secular history (cf. *Ibid*: Cullmann 1962:20f). The plan of God is now actualised through the history of the Church. It is the task of the Church now to reveal through her unfolding history

the meaning of the eternal salvific plan. For the Church is now the sign of salvation and revelation. God's love expressed through the Son, must now be shown through the Church. And in the Apocalypse the Church is presented as the place of God's final revelation.

Post-Biblical attitudes to History

How the mood of the age creates a 'myth', which explains historical events is beautifully illustrated in the growth of the theological and philosophical understanding of history in the Christian era. The earliest mood of the Christians was one of persecution by, and isolation from, the world. This resulted in a pessimism in regard to 'this world' and its history (cf. D'Arcy 1961:84).³ The situation may be compared to that of Israel after the collapse of the Monarchy and during the Exile. The Exile played a purifying role in the vision of Israel; it spiritualised their hopes and aspirations to a great extent; still the people looked forward to the day when their God would, after a period of punishment, again restore them to new heights of glory.

For the early Christians, on the other hand, persecution and antagonism were not punishments of their own sins; they were attributed to the sinful world, which thwarted the will of God. The sinful world would soon be ruined and the sinners would be abandoned to eternal damnation (cf. Ibid. 87).⁴ Christ whose second coming was considered imminent, and would enter his Kingdom, which lay beyond history, would take up the elect. The optimism of the Christians was based not on the establishment of an earthly city but on its final destruction and the appearance of the 'heavenly city'.

Further, the feeling that the Christ-event marked the end of time, the *eschaton*, created the impression that nothing more was to be expected in history. It is on account of this attitude that the early Christians, though they inherited the historical-mindedness typical of the biblical or Hebrew tradition, did not elicit interest in the on-going history. History till the Christ-event was meaningful and revelatory, but history after it contained nothing, according to their point of view (cf. Ibid. 84), and many Protestant theologians of the so-called 'neo-orthodox' school, and to a lesser degree, by the so-called eschatological Catholic theologians, share this view largely in our day. The meaning of the period of the Church, of the growth of the 'body' of Christ, somehow eludes them.

Gradually however, it dawned on many that, though the advent of Christ brought the world to its climax and completion, life had to go on, and Christians had to find meaning in the time process. The OT people were under the shadow of the Law, according to St. Paul, and Christ's advent removed the shadow. "But, although we are no longer under the shadow of the Law, we live in the shadow of Christ among the nations", said Origen (as quoted above). Though Christ came, his presence in history still constituted a shadow, a mystery, which had to unfold itself in history. St. Augustine observed: "They (the Apostles) saw the Head (Christ) and believed in the Body (the Church); we see the Body and believe in the Head". Time-process was to reveal the 'body' of Christ. This attitude grows as the centuries pass, as the Church expands and settles down in the cultures of the world. The primitive Christians, under the impact of the expectation of an imminent Parousia, hoped, as if on one leg, ready to quit this world at any moment. When this expectation increasingly proved to be unrealistic, Christians began leisurely to balance on both legs and settle down in history.

St. Augustine and his disciple Orosius, perhaps the first theologians of history, are deeply wedded to the Hebrew attitude and fought a relentless war against the classical cyclic view and the ancient belief in chance or accident. Still they manifest a pessimism, characteristic of the early Christians. The history of peoples and empires were a sad spectacle, a spectacle of man at variance with God and with himself, chasing false hopes and dreams (cf. *Ibid*: 87; D'Arcy 1961:84). In spite of this pessimism, history for them is revelatory. God, who made man, exercises continual providence over mankind; and this is shown in his justice, which punishes sin: and in suffering, which disciplines man to repent and correct himself.

This 'Providence' view of history became the conventional Christian view until the eighteenth century. And even now it remains the uncritical spontaneous reaction to history of many religious men and women. In the seventeenth century Bossuet championed this view with great force but with obvious naivety; his 'Finger of God' explanation was just grist for the mill of the rationalist Voltaire (cf. *Ibid*: 94-96, 99)⁵. There is an exception to this conventional view, and that is in the High Middle Ages. The Middle Ages had immense respect for Greek scientific intellect. The medieval cosmology was more Aristotelian than Christian. The naturalism of the Middle Ages was Christian only in so

far as it had been modified to accommodate the idea of creation by a personal God (cf. *Ibid*: 90f; Richardson 1964:75). The Bible nowhere argues from the world to God and does not suggest that nature provides us with analogies of truths concerning a divine realm. The heavens may declare the glory of God (Ps. 21:1) to those who had been obedient to his word in their own history, but 'nature' (for which there is no Hebrew equivalent) was not the source of a knowledge of God which was independent of, or supplementary to, his word in history' (Richardson *ibid*:75f). The medieval mind did not regard history as a source of significant knowledge. Nature, not history, was the mirror of the divine realm. Rationalistic theology of the Middle Ages, like the rationalistic philosophy of the eighteenth century, looks through nature at nature's God. St. Augustine's strong sense of revelation of God's will in the events of world-history, gave place during the succeeding centuries to the conception of a divine revelation written down in a book about history; the revelation was located objectively, so to speak, in the events narrated in the Scriptures, but it was apprehended subjectively by medieval men not in events, which were no longer present, but in the written record of those events, a present possession divinely guaranteed. The task of the theologian did not consist in an engagement with history, but in a systematisation of the proportional truths of Scriptures and in the rational conclusions.

The full impact of the Greek rationalism is yet to be made on the men of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the Middle Ages the Christian biblical view of revelation acted as a moderating agent. Isolated cases of extreme rationalism might have existed. For example, Raymond of Sebon would maintain that the whole content of revealed truth could be discovered from nature. But the more common view was that of St. Thomas: revelation was necessary for the knowledge of saving truths, such as Incarnation. Atonement and so on. The eighteenth century Enlightenment in its complete disregard for any revealed truth fully subscribed to the classical Greek view of history. They hailed Thucydides and other Greek historians as inventors in the sphere of historiography..

Nothing could happen in history, which philosophical thought could not understand. History was static; man's hope of progress lay in understanding and living according to the unchanging laws of human nature, the violation of which in the past accounted for the melancholy

story of mankind. Just as the rationalism of Thucydides led only to the irrationalism of Polybius, who virtually abandoned the search for historical causality and acknowledged Fortune (*Tyche*, the unpredictable) as the hidden controller of human destiny, so the rationalism of the eighteenth century often fell back on what is known as the 'Horse-shoe Nail' theory to explain history. In a sense it was the negation of rational explanation. It reintroduced into modern thought the whole conception of 'fate' or 'blind chance', which St. Augustine had once exorcized from history.

Two isolated voices, which dissented from this general mood of the eighteenth century, were those of Montesquieu and Vico. The historical relativism of the former went unheeded then. "Jan Battista Vico is the Melchizedec of the Age of Reason, without ancestors and also without progeny. He rejected the Cartesian view that the only knowledge was to possess the certainty and clarity of mathematics; he held that history possesses its own certainty, and that it is of an altogether different order". Vico viewed history as an evolution from the primitive to the advanced. For him the sacred and the secular formed one history: History is man's work, in contrast to nature, the work of God. But the progress and change brought about by man is in accordance with the law written in his heart. And God is the author of this law. Thus history reveals man's powers and God's purpose.

During the nineteenth century the rationalistic doctrine of static human nature was gradually abandoned, or at least modified. Montesquieu's preliminary intimation of historical relativity, and Vico's suggestion of the organic growth of nations, at last attained explicit recognition in the European mind. The concept of history became dimensional; the past was no longer viewed from the vantage point of constant and universal principles, valid for all nations and epochs, as Voltaire, Hume and even Gibbon had viewed it. The Hegelian dialectic evolution of the Spirit, and its antithesis, the Marxian dialectic evolution of Matter, were extreme reactions to the static view of the rationalists. From the point of view of Hegel, Marx and Darwin, history constituted absolute revelation, independent of any external agent.

Still, nineteenth century historiography in its main lines of development, as Richardson points out, did not entirely succeed in freeing itself from the incubus of eighteenth century rationalism. The main reasons were 1) Many historians made little effort to see the past: from

the point of view of the men of the past; 2) The underlying 'myth' (overall interpretation) of nineteenth century historiography was the rationalist myth: the Greeks had laid the foundations of science and history and had kindled the torch of intellectual freedom; 3) The immense prestige of the natural sciences influenced historians. They applied scientific method (positivist method) to the study of history, and raised history to the realm of a science (cf. *Ibid.* 96, 98, 103, 105-110).

The 'scienticism' produced what is called the 'positivist' view of history. It is this attitude, which was at the back of liberal theologians of the nineteenth century who were in search of the 'historical Jesus'. The same positivistic attitude inspired Protestant theologians' disengagement from history, which started with Kierkegaard and culminated in Barth and neo-orthodoxy and Bultmanian existential theology.

Modern Trends

Modern theologians may be grouped - this grouping is mainly based on their approach to history - under the following headings. The Catholic theologians may be divided into incarnationists, eschatologists, and those who occupy a middle position between these extremes. The Protestant theologians belong to one of the following groups; i.e., neo-orthodoxy, existentialism, biblical theology and theology of history.

Of these, various groups of incarnationist theologians would ascribe to history the maximum importance; they try to see secular and sacred history as one whole. History is continually changing and progressing, but there is always the presence of the Word of God, of Christ and His Spirit in history. Theologians of this category look forward to a happy conclusion when the interrelation between sacred history and secular history will become most transparent. For them history, past, present and future, is full of meaning; is fully revelatory. The eschatological theologians deliberately eschew such optimism and cautiously take up the Augustinian position. Protestant theologians belonging to the neo-orthodox group would retire even more radically to eschatology. The existentialists, in spite of their disengagement from history, are conscious of the value of historical existence; nevertheless they are the least time-conscious. The biblical theologians and theologians of history represent the twentieth century re-involvement in history in varying degrees. Perhaps Wolfhart Pannenberg is the most revolutionary among them (cf. O' Collins 1966: 394-406).⁶ Alan Richardson has much in common with him.

Here we may hazard a suggestion. The incarnational tradition of the Catholic theologians was more or less firmly established by St. Irenaeus towards the end of the second century. Incidentally he was the most ecclesiastical-minded of the Christian thinkers of old. His key concept of Christology - the idea of recapitulation of the whole creation in and by the Word Incarnate - is of paramount significance. This theological tradition, which we would venture to call the 'Mystical Body' tradition, was never completely lost sight of in Catholic theology, though the hierarchological conception of the Church right from the Middle Ages somewhat obscured it. It was revived in the nineteenth century in the Tuebingen School by Adam Moehler. In the twentieth century Karl Adam, another savant of the same school, again brought it to the surface. In the 30s one sees a 'mystical body' movement in the Church. It is this tradition that most explain why for Catholic theologians the problem of history was never so vexing as it was for their Protestant counterparts.

The Protestant tradition begins with a highly supra-natural and supra-historical emphasis on redemption (Luther and Calvin). This tradition underwent a change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when an opposite tendency became current, which was represented by the liberal theological movement. This movement, which was a direct result of rationalism and 'scienticism', attempted to eschew the supernatural as far as possible (Schleiermacher to Ritschl to Harnack) (cf. Richardson 1964: 121-24).⁷ But this liberal historical position lost appeal because of its failure in the positivist quest for the historical Jesus. The failure resulted in a gradual disengagement from the historical preoccupation. S. Kierkegaard was perhaps the initiator of this disengagement movement; A. Schweitzer became its most vocal protagonist. The new tendency distrusted history, which they thought, was of no value for salvation, or the Christian message. It culminated in Karl Barth, the leader of what is called 'neo-orthodoxy' or the revival of the earliest Protestant supra-historicism (cf. *ibid*: 134)⁸. Bultmann's existential theology too is an attempt at such a disengagement from history.

One thing appears to me most significant. It is among the Protestant theologians that the death-of-God and the religionless Christianity movement originated and prospered. We may be on doubtful grounds, still we venture to suggest that it is the Protestant theologians who felt most keenly the need to make Christianity relevant to historical progress, to make Christianity this-worldly, religionless and even Godless. The religious Christianity of the liberals, which tried to be partial to history,

evaporated under the impact of positivist history; the religious Christianity of neo-orthodoxy, a reaction to the former, was so unworldly that it appeared to lose touch with the world, and historical progress altogether. Man's life in this world, his efforts to build up an earthly city appeared to be devoid of any meaning before a religious Christianity. The secularist theologians wanted to save Christianity and the value of historical progress even if it meant the sacrifice of Christianity as a 'religion'. And Christianity as a religion appeared to them to stand in the way of their task in the world. Existentialist theology, though it was a reaction against liberal theology and was disengaged from history, nonetheless attributed great value to man's historical decisions and his will and effort to build an earthly city. It demythologised much of the Christian religion, brought it down to the level of man's decision in history, here and now, in time and space. This helped the secularist theologians to a great extent.

Conclusion

We would conclude this paper with a few reflections:

1) Within the school of theological interpretation of history, two main tendencies have been observed: one opposed to the other, but not necessarily mutually exclusive. They represent the two poles of Christian faith: 'the already' and 'the not yet'. The eschatological or 'crisis' view of history emphasizes 'the already', while the opposite 'incarnational' view stresses 'the not yet'. Apart from the field of theological interpretations, two other main attributes to history are noticeable: the one represents the classical determinist approach, and the other the modern evolutionist approach. According to the former, history is predetermined by nature and is insignificant as a source of knowledge; this is too barren an outlook on history as revelatory. The modern evolutionary view, which is at least indirectly inspired by the Hebrew view, sees history as constantly changing and re-creating and advancing. Each new phase of history brings forth something new, which it is not possible to recognize before history reaches that particular stage. History is most revealing, according to this view.

Related to this evolutionary approach, is also the post-positivist concept of history: history is not merely concerned with facts as such but also their interpretation. Every age has its 'myth' (or overall interpretation), which helps us to interpret history. The 'myth' of the age is the creation of historical forces. Such 'myths' arise in the wake of

catastrophic situations: e.g. a global war, a devastating revolution, etc. The 'myth' is thus revealed by history, and it in turn reveals history as it becomes the key to historians to interpret history. The most universal and constant 'myth' is the religious 'myth'. The religious 'myth' or theological interpretation of history, in the eyes of faith, is not merely the creation of historical forces as such but is determined by the intervention of God in history, the self-communication of God in and through history. A few of these revelatory events are spectacular (the calling of Abraham, the Exodus, the Christ-event, the Pentecost event) and have a devastating effect on history and its interpretation.

(2) Now to go back to the theological view of history, the eschatological approach makes a distinction between 'sacred history' and 'secular history'. Secular history is of no particular value; sacred history is all-important. But even sacred history climaxed in the Christ-event, and nothing more is to be expected from the ongoing time after that event.

It has been claimed that the eschatological view is the only biblical view of history. We would contest this claim. There are in the Gospels diverse hints that the world itself is in some way to be brought into obedience to the divine designs. St. Paul in his Letters to the Corinthians, for instance, brings the whole world into the embrace of Christ. In Christ 'were all things created in heaven and on earth visible and invisible'. The Father is through Him to reconcile all things unto himself, both as to things that are on earth' and things that are in heaven. He tells the Romans also that the expectation of the creature waits for revelation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity: not willingly but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope'.

(3) Creation is God's; history and progress, which are recreations by the instrumentality of man are also ultimately God's. In creation and re-creation God is realizing his purpose. Can this purpose be different from the final goal of God? God's redeeming grace acts in nature and in history as a ferment. The ferment is constantly leavening the whole dough, and history must manifest itself as the perfectly fermented dough ready for consummation. Is not this the way of understanding the assertion that history will reveal God's plan?

(4) Still another question: History has revealed the Redeemer; will it reveal the final redemption of the world? No definite clue is given in the revelation. We have the Word of God that Christ will come a second

time and unveil the mystery of history and consummate it. What part will history have in this unveiling? We are not sure. Sacred history will have a part in it. But is sacred history an isolated thing from secular history? Neither sacred history nor secular history by themselves will be able to bring about the final transfiguration. A new vertical and most catastrophic intervention of God will be necessary for it. Will that transfiguration not be a revelation that sacred history and secular history, after all, are not two separate spheres of God's action? Will it not disclose that the final act of God is to consummate the mutual interaction between sacred history and secular history?

(5) Even those most sceptical about progress must admit that, with the help of experience, experiments and new theories of knowledge, an almost infinite number of errors have been corrected. And we no longer take for granted bestial religions, savage moral systems and customs. What has this to do with the holistic supernatural perfection of the Kingdom of God? D'Arcy answers: "Those who raise the difficulty make the mistake of supposing the heavenly society or city to be already formed, or to come into being at the end of time. It is here and now in the process of coming into being; Founded by Christ, its citizens are born into and live and die in this life. The relation is to be found in the transfigured experience of this life."

These considerations lead us to the thought of Teilhard de Chardin. The world, its history and its progress are in the process of what he calls "Christification". What we acknowledge as sacred history is that part of world history, the Christification of which we are aware of (cf. Gutierrez 1970:259)⁹. Till the 'Omega Point' is reached, the progressive Christification of history will be a partially veiled affair. Once the Omega Point dawns, the Christification process will be complete objectively, and even more, subjectively. History, when it arrives at this point, will reveal itself as fully Christified and all distinction between sacred history and secular history will vanish from our minds. History will become revelation, fully illumined by the *lumen gloriae*, 'And God will be all in all'.

JEEVASS

St. Antony's Monastery

Aluva - 683 101

Bibliography

- B. W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, New Jersey: 1966
- J. Barr, *Revelation Through History in Old Testament and Modern Theology*, New Theology, No.1, ed. By Martin E. Marty, New York: 1964.
- Carl Becker, "Detachment and Writing of History", *The Atlantic monthly*, October 1910.
- D. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Centre*, New York: 1966
- J.V.L. Casserly, *Toward a Theology of History*, New York: 1965
- R.G. Collingwood, *The idea of History*, Oxford: 1946
- D.Cullmann, *Christ and Time: Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* London: 1962.
- Max I Dimont, "Jews, God and History" *New American Library* (1962).
- Gustavo M. Gutierrez, "Note for a Theology of Liberation", *Theological Studies*, 31(1970).
- L. Monden, *Faith: Can Man Still Believe?* New York; 1970.
- R. Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy*, New York: 1937.
- G.G.O' Collins, S.J., "Revelation as History", *Heythrop Journal*, (1966), pp.394-406
- Alan Richardson, *History Sacred and Profane*, London: 1964.

Foot Notes

- 1 In this chapter, entitled 'The Two World Systems', Richardson discusses, compares and contrasts the Greek and Hebrew views of history.
- 2 It was Herodotus who conceived this theory of balancing between the forces of nature and of man.
- 3 In the first centuries when the Christian had to live a catacomb life, he paid little attention to the world around him, His main theme of preaching was 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God'.
- 4 Orosius, the famous disciple of St. Augustine in his *Seven Books of History against the Pagans* attributed the fall of the great empires of the past to the sin of Adam and his descendants. "God is merciful to the Roman Empire because of the part it has to play in the coming of Christ".
- 5 D' Arcy gives a summary of the 'Providence Theology' of Bossuet.
- 6 O' Collins describes fairly well the theology of Revelation through history. Pannenberg's view on the theological nature of history is explained at length.
- 7 Richardson describes the transition and progress of theology of history from liberal theological movement of the nineteenth century to today's.
- 8 Richardson says that Barth, in his reaction against the liberal view has gone farther than any other 20th century theologian towards the total disengagement of faith and history.
- 9 According to Gutierrez Teilhard once said that the life of salvation in the Church - i.e., the salvation of history - is a reflectively christified part of humanity.

‘Revisiting’ the Hebrew Historiography

Antony Kalliath

In the present clash of civilizations the Hebrew concept of history from the perspective of Israelite's faith and World-vision has to be revisited. Jewish people has survived the vicissitudes of history for more than four millennia. The biblical paradigm especially in reference to the land interpreted in blind literarism is unacceptable today. The New Testament dispensation which points to the new earth supersedes the Old Testament promise of a bounded land. Jesus Christ does not territorialize salvation in terms of a particular geographical area. He questions even the sacredness of Jerusalem and of worship of God understood in terms of this mountain or that mountain . What the present history witnesses is the confluence of cultures.

Introduction

In the present post-cold war era, it is the ‘Clash of Civilizations’, not territorial ambitions or political ideologies that is causing conflicts and chaos world wide. Historiography becomes a critical concern in this context because nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America after being emancipated from the colonial yoke have discovered the unique importance of their histories to define and ennoble their national identity and cultural entity in the present world politics. In India, for example, Hindutva regime is rewriting (saffronizing) Indian history for political and cultural ambitions. Needless to say, the absolutism of Old Testament history as salvation and revelation at the exclusion of other histories has been instrumental in the militant mission of the Church, which has erased numerous local cultures and ethnic histories world wide for the spread of Christianity. Naturally the Christian interpretation of history

turns out to be a common target of attack in this cultural awakening and political assertion in Asia and Africa. It seems quite relevant and rewarding to 'revisit' the Hebrew understanding of history in the context of the ongoing debate on historiography for locating it in present civilizational debate. Firstly, revisiting the Hebrew concept of history is carried out from the perspective of Israelite's faith and world vision. Later Israel's interpretation of history is critically seen through the 'eyes' of the aborigines with whom Israel had been in confrontation during their long wanderings and finally in the Promised Land.

1. The Fascination of the Jewish People and Their History!

In the whole of human history, the story of the Hebrews is an unique phenomenon. Jewish people has survived the vicissitudes of their long and turbulent history of nearly four thousand years upholding their cultural identity and character intact. This Jewish accomplishment has not any historical parallel if we take the complexity and challenges which they lived through. The history of Israel unfolds on a wide canvas of six major ancient civilizations (Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman) of which many have now vanished in the vagaries and alleys of historical process. To their credit, Jews have cruised through the tide of time 'wrestling' with various upheavals and tragedies, befitting their name Israel (Jacob). Undeniably, the Israel is, today, verily one of the most resilient and resourceful people in the world community, and has carved out its own political niche in the present *real* world politics. Statistically, the Jews may be a microscopic minority - one half of one per cent of the three billion *plus* world population. But their contribution to the humanity in the fields of religion, politics, psychology, science, literature, philosophy is incredible. First and foremost, Jesus Christ, the Son of God sprang from this stock of mankind. The Mohammedan faith which 400 million *plus* people profess, has its roots in Judaism. Karl Max, another great Jew, has had a billion followers of his Communist ideology, though their number is dwindling after 'Perestroika'. If Albert Einstein, a Jew, is the patriarch of the modern physics, Sigmund Freud is another Jew who is considered as the father-head of modern psychology. More than ten percent of all the Nobel prizes have gone to Jews in the past! We can go on adding many eminent Jewish names to this long list of men and women of exceptional caliber and accomplishment, who have contributed to the humanity extraordinarily.

Moreover, an attempt of 'revisiting' the Hebrew concept of history, here, is not out of sheer academic interest alone. But a reflection on the history of this genius tiny flock once again is warranted in the context

of ongoing international conflicts in which the key role of Israel has to be recognized and accepted. A critical understanding of the Jewish interpretation of history which is vital in their religious and political identity consciousness, thus becomes quite significant and relevant today to facilitate the culture of dialogue in the emerging new world order of a pluralistic vision and praxis.

2. Phenomenon of Jewish History

Up until 1948, for close of three thousand years, the Jews did not have a country (though still disputed) of their own. Jewish history commenced four thousand years ago (2000 BCE) when the great patriarch Abraham had a 'dream' of a 'great nation' (Gen 12:2) out of which a multitude of nations would come; he would from now onwards be Abraham (no more Abram) the father of nations, and the whole earth would be filled with his descendants. (Gen 17:5). The tiny clan of Abraham who left his home town, Ur in Babylonia in 2000 BCE, had been nomads in the land of Canaan roughly for four hundred years (2000-1600 BCE) dialoguing with Canaanite religious practices and social customs,

When the famine swept the land in 1600 BCE, under the leadership of Joseph people migrated into the fertile Nile delta, Egypt in search of food. The history records that they were warmly welcomed in the beginning. Their comfortable stay there dates back from 1400 BCE to 1200 BCE until their departure under Moses.

Then commenced their long journey in Sinai Desert which climaxed at the conquest of Canaan in Palestine in 1100. After three hundred years, they were conquered by Assyrians in 800 BCE, and were again dispersed. The restoration of Israel took place under Josiah in 700. The following century (600-500) the Kingdom of Judah was invaded and defeated by Babylonians and then commenced the long Babylonian slavery. During 500 to 400 BCE Israel returned to Judea from Babylonia under Cyrus, the king of Persia. In the beginning of third century BCE (334) Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and annexed Palestine. Then onwards Jews came under the Greco-Roman influence both politically as well as culturally (Hellenization). Though Rome and Greek civilizations became almost dead and extinct in the flux of time, the Jews had the art and wits to tide over the currents of history.

Among many challenges which the Jews faced, a cleavage in the concept of Judaism, the one in Palestine and the other in *Diaspora*, had been shattering in their long drawn history. From the time of Babylonian exile in the 6th century B.C.E to the late 19th century C.E it was a time of

fragmentation for the Jews. They were dispersed worldwide, and found themselves in small groups in various alien cultures. Not being in their home land, they contained this challenge by the creation of a religious code, namely Talmud. It was more a spiritual force than a dogma for keeping the scattered people in the Jewish tradition. This is called the 'Talmud Age' in Jewish history.

The birth of Islam in seventh century, which found its roots in Judaism, had been an excruciating moment in Israelite's history of survival. Under Moslem rule they kept their identity as a "People of the Book". Moreover, during the Middle Ages they were 'children of ghetto' and they contained militant mission of Catholicism tactically. Lastly, in the Modern Age the Jews have had to engage in a multi-pronged combat against various forces, namely nationalism, communism, fascism, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and now Islamic fundamentalism.¹

With the re-establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the four-thousand years long odyssey of the Jewish people seems to have an emphatic climax. During these forty centuries, from the 2000 BCE to 2000 CE, they struggled, fought, fell, revived, regressed, and spread over four continents and lived through six civilizations, and is presently thriving as an ethnically well-knit vibrant people bracing up all the challenges of today's world.

The above brisk overview of Jewish phenomena shows that the Jewish history unfolded in a wide ranging context of cultural encounters, political conflicts, and religious upheavals. The pertinent question which baffles human reason is about the inner resource and resilience which have empowered them from within to inch forward steadfast, and to come through victorious against all odds and obstacles in its tryst with destiny down through the past four thousand years.

3. An "Arrested Civilization"?

All the mighty civilizations with which Israel had to fight in the past, had either vanished from the face of the earth, or had become passé. Today, the Chinese, Indic and Egyptian are the only living cultural traditions who are as old as the Jewish. Unlike the Jews, these civilizations did not have to combat for their survival in alien lands. The Jews survived three thousand years without a country, or army, or statehood of their own, and, yet marvelously preserved their ethnic identity and character without compromise.

Jewish history has baffled all historical interpretation. Jewish saga betrays both Spenglerian cyclical evolution of history and Toynbee's "challenge and response" theory of historical process. For Toynbee,

Judaism as a culture is nothing but a fossil left over from a Syriac civilization.

Jewish history defies both these theories. The present vibrant Jewish people obviously discredits Spengler's theory. Toynbee's theory of survival of a civilization in terms of creative responses to the challenges of time is not strictly applicable in the case of Israel. As the history witnesses, the Jews have not responded to the various civilizational exposures by way of creative assimilation and synthesis, for example, as in the case of Indic culture. Indeed, there were some cultural and social borrowings in the societal realm from the neighbouring cultures more out of expediency than convictions².

Moreover, in the Patriarchal period, Israel's ancestors, 'inculturated' the Canaanite forms of worship and lifestyle. The patriarchs are seen to worship at traditional Canaanite shrines like: "the sacred place at Shechem" (Gen.12:6); "Bethel" (Gen.12:8); Hebron (Gen.13:18) and Beersheba (Gen.21:33). Although Abraham built altars to his family god (Gen 12:8; 13,4), he never instituted separate priesthood. In fact he accepted a blessing from the non-Israelite priest Melchizedek and offered him tithes in return (Gen.14:18-20). The texts of Bible can slip back and forth and speak indiscriminately of the Canaanite god as El-berith and Baal-*berith* (covenant) (see Judg.8:33; 9, 46). Eventually "El" remained an acceptable title for Israel's God; "Baal" was repudiated. These religious and cultural 'borrowing' were done more out of pragmatism and common sense than of theological convictions. Being aliens and nomads in foreign lands this syncretic approach and friendly co-operation with the "foreigners" had been the only way of survival.

Later when Israelites began to be independent the attitudes towards 'foreigners' had changed from Moses through the age of Joshua until the royal period of David. Foreign nations are judged biblically from the viewpoint of Israel's benefit. Joshua saw a partial fulfilment of promises in setting up a series of independent, federated "tribes" in Canaan (Joshua 24). David seemed to extend those promises by establishing a large empire in which foreign people marched with booty to pay tribute to David, or Solomon, and worship Yahweh in the temple. One such ceremony recorded in Psalm.87 in which politics seemed to have spilled over into the area of theology.

During the post-exilic period Israel's reactions toward the Gentile took on different forms. At Jerusalem the Jews tended to be locked into a small ghetto. The dominant theology there rejected all outside contact, repudiated and even dissolved mixed marriages (Ezra 9-10), and dreamed

of the final battle and victory over the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphate (Joel 3:9-21). The prophet Joel reread and reversed the meaning of some important earlier prophecies of peace. Radically he revised the vision of peace within the books of Isaiah and Micah (Is 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-4) into an oracle of war: “Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears” (Joel 3:10). Ezra repudiated even the Jews who had been left behind in Judah at the time of Babylonian exile.

During the period of Apocalyptic expectations (539-7 B.C.E) hatred for the foreigners soured high (Ez 38-39), and reached an apex in 1 and 2 Maccabees and Daniel 7-12.

During this epoch, Judaism became so tiny in its geographical lines that world politics could just ignore it until the very late period of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans (167-63 B.C.E.). Within its “ghetto” it tended to ignore the world and concentrate upon its ritual and ethnic purity- an exclusivistic and introverted existence. Finally, at Jerusalem the apocalyptic movement emerged out of many factors like political isolation, religious alienation, and the advocacy of ‘remnant theology’. This movement reached its most intense expression in Daniel 7-12. Weird symbols reflect the horrendous times; law was annulled (Dan.9:27; 1 Macc.2:57). Apocalyptic announced the destruction of the persecutors and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Yet the answer turned out differently. The kingdom of God did not come. Instead Hasmonean dynasty seized political and religious power. Reactions in Judea took various forms. Hostile religious groups or sects emerged like the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots and the Essenes.

The above discussion shows that Israelites were not, in heart, dialogical towards new cultures and civilizations even in the worst moments of their diaspora. In these crisis moments, instead of taking on the challenges, they became more and more ethnocentric and found refuge in their cultural and religious archetypes. They were never ready to diffuse or dilute their faith in the grand dream of Abraham, and were never ready to dialogue with new views and ways at the theological level except at the external ritual and societal customs, that too with certain interpretations. Israel-centeredness had been prominent in their relationships with the Nations. The people of Israel, in spite of their ethnocentrism and non-dialogical attitude, has reached out the Third Millennium CE as a vibrant people.

True, the Jewish history did not fit into the customary cyclic theory of Spengler or the evolutionary theory of Toynbee or the Marxian theory

in terms of production. Toynbee regards Judaism as an “arrested civilization” and has relegated Jewish history to a minor footnote. But this “arrested civilization” survived all the challenges baffling all historical logistic! Hebrew historiography may shed some light on this logic of their survival in their tumultuous history.

4. Problematic of Hebrew Historiography

The question whether there is really a biblical Historiography in the strict sense of the discipline is often raised. Historiography is understood as a narrative genre in which events of the past are taken true, real and probable in terms of evidence. History is a Greek word, meaning simply an investigation or inquiry. History as a science enquires into events in a dated past; it is not a legend but research and it ministers human knowledge. As a critical discipline based on hard historical facts, historiography is missing in the Old Testament writings. There is indeed a chronological progression, and structuring and cataloguing of great periods in a sequence in the Old Testament literature. However, the Biblical tradition is, by and large, marked by antiquarianism, a concern to preserve, classify and arrange a cultural heritage.³

At the same time, historicity of the events or facts is not necessarily the only factor which defines its historiography. The selection and ordering of the past events from the perspective of the present belong to the discipline of historiography. The past is not out there as an independent and neutral reality. There are no such things as ‘bare facts’. Reality exists and is always understood ‘interpreted’; ‘facts’ and ‘faith’ exist together and cannot be separated in ‘experience’. The past is never there as an utter object for analysis but it is what meditated through the work of historians. History as a kind of research or inquiry proceeds by the interpretation of evidence for human knowledge. Hence history must be written afresh in each generation.⁴ Such an approach and recognition provides a realistic framework for understanding both ancient and modern historiography. Indeed history is evolved in a continuous revision and interpretation in the light of new evidences and new methods applied. Historiography is historian’s narrative construction through a process of selection, organization of facts responsive to the cultural context and the purposes it is designed to serve.

But a postmodernist interpretative approach to historiography which relies totally on the hermeneutical interaction between the text and the reader may be an extreme position. Here the objective reality of any referential truth behind the text is not a question at all. The text has its validity in virtue of itself - the distinction between fact and fiction is

erased. The truth of the text is what the 'historian' has constructed.⁵ The opposite view of blunt dependence on the facts may not be acceptable either. That is to say, the task of the historian is merely to present the facts which will speak by themselves. "It is not I who speak, but history that speaks through me".

If a middle path is opted to appreciate Old Testament, a sequence of events becomes history only when organized by the interpretative human intelligence. In this understanding, the selection of the events is not totally dependent on historian and his or her purposes but also on the cultural context and social concerns to which the historian belongs. The historian, then, will be writing about the past of the present. The present of the historian is the reality within the context of which the past is brought to light and interpreted.⁶ If history is likewise understood as "the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past"⁷ O.T literature can then be conceived in the frame of modern historiography.

Moreover, the writing of history is a literary activity that presupposes a historical consciousness which serves as a vantage point. If history is understood more in terms of interpretation from specific vantage points than a 'just history', these vantage points (myth or crisis) offer a specific character to the history of an age, distinguishing it from others. In Israel, a new form of historical consciousness emerged based on sequence of events which is interpreted in a dynamic, rectilinear and purposive conception of history. This was a qualitative departure from that of prevailing Ancient East's world view which was based on the rhythm of the nature. The core insight of Israelite's linear concept of time, different from the cyclic idea of passage of time in the Ancient world was Israel's understanding of Yahweh as the Lord of history, who entered covenant relationship with Israel. It is Yahweh who *acts* secretly in history and brings all to pass, and the secret divine activity is the real power at work in human affairs. Thus Israel's history has embodied a religious perspective. A religious history is an interpretation of historical facts in the light of a relationship between God and humans. History in this sense is what happens between God and humans as the Jewish theologian, Martin Buber says.⁸ Old Testament history belongs to this religious framework through and through. Thus it may be appreciated as a moral and religious critical commentary on Israel's past in the broader sense of historiography.

5. Concept of 'Times'

Idea of time or the attitude towards the passage of time is critical in the historical consciousness of a people. The Western way of thinking

tends to emphasize time as a measurement. Time is conceived as a measured and numbered empty space that can be filled with events. It is a *quantitative* and rectilinear time. Time is like an abstract straight line *ad infinitum* on which past, present and future are projected.

In the case of the Greek, time is not conceived as a progressing line with beginning and end. The flux of time is conceived in circular movement, and everything keeps recurring. Redemption in the Greek thought is then emancipation from this eternal circular course of time like that of Hindu understanding of salvation (*mukti*) which sees liberation as freedom from the cycle of life and death. In Greek concept of time, existence in history is then seen as an enslavement and curse, time has no redemptive value. Hence, for the Greeks concept of redemption through history by a divine action is beyond their logic. Redemption is a transference from this time bound existence into that timeless state. Thus blessedness is thus spatial; it is determined by the contrast between this world of time and the timeless Beyond.⁹

For Hebrews, idea of time is rectilinear but a concept of absolute time is unknown to them. They are not capable of thinking time in the abstract, and idea of time independent of events is inconceivable. They do not have a word for the modern concept of 'time' in terms of quantity and measurement. For them 'time' is understood in the sense of 'a point of time' or 'period of time', 'appointed time' or '*kairos*'. There is a time of giving birth (Micah 5:3), a time for animals to be gathered together (Gen 29:7); a time when kings go forth to battle (II Sam 11:1). The tree yields its fruit 'in its time' (Ps 1:3) and God gives his creatures food 'in due time' (Ps 104:27). Every thing under heaven has its own time: a time to be born, to die, to plant....(Eccles 3:1ff). It means that 'time' implies 'event'.

A Jew will not locate himself or herself anywhere but will locate events, places and sees himself or herself as on a journey. Sacred events like Creation, Exodus and Covenant with Moses, places like Jerusalem, Sinai, Bethel, and times like the festivals and times for fasting or sowing are fixed points. When the individual, for example, celebrates the Passover festival, he or she becomes in a sense *contemporaneous* with his or her ancestors. The present time will be experienced as a saving act of God in the past (for example, the Exodus).¹⁰ Every event has its definite place in the time sequence. Event is inconceivable devoid of its time and *vice versa*. This profound insight is imperative to recognize the mysterious *kairos* for things. Event highlights the quality of time rather than its quantity or duration.

In the case of Israel, initially the great festivals were indeed determined by nature's ordering of the Palestine year - in a cosmic rhythm. In this sense the cult in the ancient world was essentially 'anti-historical'. The festal calendar was Canaanite in origin and was conceived as expression of a farmer's religion. Sowing and reaping were conceived as sacral events. After the settlement, the agrarian festivals of Israel underwent a radical change. That is to say, Israelites *historicized* their festivals. For example, the festival of the Unleavened Bread which falls at the beginning of the barley harvest became a commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 23: 15) and the great harvest and vintage festivals remembered the sojourn in the wilderness (Lev 23:42ff).¹¹ Here one finds Israel's explicit break from the Canaanite world view and thus the Israel acquiring her own identity through a new historical perspective. It shows the Israel's belief that they are primarily bound by definite historical events rather than the periodic cycles of nature. Thus the idea of history made a radical division between Israel and the surrounding indigenous people in terms of world-visions.

Moreover, Israel's idea of time does not give much importance to the relativity of historical events as seen in the modern understanding of history. Von Rad says: "The historical acts by which Yahweh founded the community of Israel were absolute. They did not share the fate of all other events, which inevitably slip back into the past. They were actual for each subsequent generation ... in her own person she really and truly entered into the historic situation to which the festival in question was related. When Israel ate the Passover, clad s for a journey, staff in hand, sandals on her feet, and in the haste of departure (Ex 12: 11) manifestly doing more than merely remembering the Exodus: she was entering into the saving event of the Exodus itself and participating in it in a quite 'actual' way."¹² Psalm 114 vividly points to the actualization of saving events in the cult. This movement from 'agrarian' to 'historical' in the celebration of festivals had been the first critical threshold towards Israel's historical existence and it gave a distinct identity to Israel in its relation with the Ancient world.

Israel built up its historical identity on a series of events as an interpretative whole which brought up the people of Israel into being.¹³ The various saving acts are assembled in a historical sequence and are commemorated in the cult. Thus they compiled concise summaries of the saving history (Deut 26:5ff; Josh 24:2ff). The Israel then prefer to speak of 'times'. The movement from one event to another could only be conceived of as a divine decision or decree. Event get their quality and their sequence from the Lord of history.¹⁴ Hence, the Israel prefer

to speak of 'times'. When someone prays: 'my times are in thy hands' (Ps 31:16) it implies that human life is made up of a series of many times, and life is not conceived in a unique absolute and abstract time in itself (see Ezek 12:27; Job 24:1).¹⁵ The awareness that Israel was not founded upon one single event but a series of events is the bedrock of her identity.

6. History as Divine Spectrum

As the above discussion shows, Jewish historiography fundamentally belongs to a religious genre. The encounter of Abraham with Jehovah at Ur (Gen12), was the birth of the people of Israel. This continuing dialogue has been the history of the Jews. Later a covenant was made between them (Gen17:3ff). The initiative came from God; He proposed the covenant to the patriarch with the unique offer that his descendants would be a chosen people, and they would be His possession (Deut.7:6.Ex. 19:4-6). God then stipulated that all males of His chosen people should be circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Gen 17:10). God vowed that they would be given a Land (Gen 15:18ff). On their part, the Israelites practised the rite of circumcision and tried to live faithful to the covenant made with a 'jealous God' who never tolerated the images of other gods. Often they could not live up to the covenant, and then they were punished for the breach and brought back by Yahweh through renewing the covenant. The history of Israel progressed through a covenantal dialogue (the major covenants: Gen 9:8-17; 15:9-21; 17; Ex 19:24; Num 25:10-13; 2Sam 7:5-16; Jer 31:31-34) and is marked by judgement and promise of their God. They were often esteemed by their neighbours, who, nevertheless, found them a strange people worshipping an unseen monotheistic God.

The rise and fall of civilizations are often judged in terms of the victories and defeats in wars. But Jewish history offers a new frame to interpret the ebb and flow of their civilization in terms of an archetypal vision and a consciousness which was sustained by live collective memory and corporate hope through their feasts and rituals. Throughout the colourful spectacle of events and ideas unfolded in the Jewish history Abraham's grant dream prevailed as collective unconscious in Israel's triumphs and tragedies, and hopes and setbacks. In their engagement with destiny, the Jews, as God's Chosen-People, tread steadfast not into an empty future but a future charged with the hope of a Promised Land. A framework of future-mindedness anchored in God's promises has been an operational principle to take on the challenges thrown upon them in their long journey. The 'select-status' and the Promised-Land together empowered the Israelites in their tryst with destiny from within. Thus

their covenantal religiosity brought the historical and the transcendental together, and their history consequently became a divine realm of revelation and medium of salvation. History is not a thing opposed to God but is rather the means of which God makes use in order to reveal his gracious working.

The concept of 'salvation history' epitomizes Israel's perception of its tradition. The collectors and redactors of biblical narratives, especially of Yahwists (historical theologians) interpreted the origins of Israel in a theologically motivated historiographical framework of progression from sin to grace and promise to fulfilment. Prophetic collections and redactions are quite forthright to bring about the 'salvation' message.

For example, the Pentateuch is an elaborate statement of faith that has the character of a creed. It preserves short creedal statement that may properly be regarded as its foundation: Deut 6:20-4; Josh 24:2-13, but especially in Deut 26:5-9.¹⁶ They confessed this belief in her hymns (Pss, 78,105, 107,114, 136). Israel's awareness that it is Yahweh who guides their history after a definite plan and her ancestors journeyed with Him, gave Israel her identity. Israel's idea of history evolved exclusively on the sequence of the acts of Yahweh, which worked out her salvation. Biblical history is thus viewed as the realm on which God's promises are fulfilled.

As it is already mentioned, Israel encountered God in His concrete deeds in history, not in abstract, metaphysical concepts. The call of Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, many victories over the nations, finally the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan revealed to them that God was the Lord of history and the people. Even the idea of God as creator was an inference from their historical experience, not an axiom of O.T; they saw Creation (Gen 1) the beginning of Israel's history with God! They interpreted the periods of the Judges and the Kings as the fulfilment of God's promises. The rule of the kings David and Solomon was seen as the realization of God's promise of making them a great nation. They saw 'the finger of God' (Ex 8:10) in all what happened in their history and sang: "this is Yahweh's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes (Ps 115:23). "Thus, Israel's history existed only in so far as God accompanied her, and it is only this time-span which can properly be described as her history. It was God who established the continuity between the various separate events and who ordained their direction as they followed one another in time."¹⁷

Thus, for the Hebrews history is the spectrum of God's disclosure. It consists of a series of 'disclosure-situations'¹⁸. When these disclosures are designs for Israel, the history becomes redemptive. Hence history

becomes a plane of God's revelation and Israel's salvation. Thus history is salvation history. In a deeper sense 'history itself is the realization of salvation and.. theophany'.¹⁹ This very distinctive view of Israel's history as history with God was not applied in Israel's evaluation of the universal history. However in the prophetic literature world history is incorporated in the eschatological horizon. In the book of Daniel, Enoch (91:17) and in the statements of prophets like Amos 9:13 Is 60:19ff, Zech 14 an eschatological picture of world-history was vaguely taken up.

7. Eschatological Dimension

The prophets of Israel were keenly aware of the great historical movements and changes taking place in their times. Amos and Isaiah work during the war threats from Assyria. Jeremiah saw the disaster coming from the neo-Babylonians whereas Deutero-Isaiah was occupied with the emergence of the Persian king Cyrus. Haggai and Zechariah took account of the upheavals from the Persian Empire. Naturally they tried to envisage and enhance the historical perspective of the canonical books of the Old Testament on the panorama of world history.

Prophets were of the conviction that Yahweh was bringing about a new era. What that uniquely differentiated their approach was eschatological especially from the time of Amos and Hosea. What makes the difference between the prophetic outlook on the future is their unshakable conviction that in the coming events God was to deal with Israel in the most direct way. Prophetic predictions pointed to an absolute end of time but within history. The new state *beyond* was not naively understood as the continuation of what went before. Eschatology in prophetic vision focused on the 'renewing act of the historical drama'²⁰, entirely a new action in history on the part of Yahweh. It didn't imply that Israelite's religious achievements of thousands of years are thrown back to a point of vacuum. Prophets were not unaware of the election traditions. At the same time, the prophets were keenly mindful of breach of commitment to the election status, and foresaw the coming judgement on the Israel and the guarantee given on account of election lost its validity because of the unfaithfulness from the part of Israel.

Prophet's theology differed from the perspective of canonical books which was based on the past saving history. Prophets looked to the future for a new act from the part of Yahweh with passion. Thus Hosea foretells a new entry into the land, Isaiah a new David and new Zion, Jeremiah a new covenant, and Deutero-Isaiah a new Exodus. Prophets like Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah's break with the past is complete and total: the covenant is to be made anew (Jer 31:31ff) and there is to be a new Exodus (Is 43:16ff). The former saving history should be

remembered no more (Is43:16ff). But Isaiah holds that old covenant is still valid but it should be linked to the new one (New Zion, Is 1:26; the new David Is11:1). The prophets' eschatological message is that the Israel should be freed from the safety of Yahweh's canonical saving acts, and they should look towards a new saving act from God with a new commitment and loyalty.²¹

Since the future act of God is entirely a new act of God it has no qualitative continuity with what happened in the past. It is a new time. But the *eschaton* as *beyond* time is quite confusing to the Hebrews who think not in abstract categories but in concrete events. However, eschatological *beyond* is not timelessness. *Beyond* is future where the new *act* takes place, and the present time is wholly qualified and determined by the new *act* of God, then the present time itself is a totally new time, new era. Then the *eschaton* must be read off from the 'horizon of world history'. The message of the prophets is not based upon timeless ideas. Their message is addressed to a particular people in a concrete context.

Though *eschaton* is a future reality but qualitatively different from the past events, it gives ultimate meaning to the present situation. So the present is qualified by the future, and extends to the future. Then *eschaton* is also a *contemporary event*. This new way of interpreting history by the prophets was further enhanced by Jesus. Jesus announced a new time and the arrival of God's reign. "The time has come, the kingdom of God is near." (Mk 1:15). *Metanoia* in Jesus' time is like accepting the invitation to a feast (Lk 14:15-17) or finding a treasure or priceless pearl for which one sacrifices everything (Mt 13:44-15).²² What we find here is a new translation of Hebrew concept of time in terms of a future which is not an empty space but charged by the New Time, an era in which Jewish history is incorporated in the world history. As Deutero Isaiah says, the history forges ahead confidently to "the new heavens and the new earth", and from "New Moon to New Moon" (Is 66:22ff) but the Hebrews have to widen the space of their tent (Is 54:2).

8. Biblical History through the Eyes of the Dispossessed Aborigines

We were discussing the Hebrew concept of history and their religiosity by participating in their religious world vision. As Christians who participate in the Biblical faith very deeply, we unknowingly absolutize and enoble the Biblical tradition by way of comparing it with Greek or Ancient concept of history. But it is a sociological truth that no society was ever driven by one ideological factor alone, be that economic, nationalistic or religious. "For any reasonably significant historical

development, monocausal explanation is *ipso facto* wrong.”²³ Then, if we look at the Biblical religiosity and its interpretation of history through the eyes of the dispossessed and humiliated Gentiles because of the ‘land-theology’ which Israelites held in virtue of the covenant with Yahweh, we will have a second opinion on the Hebrew concept of history. Biblical scholars haven’t given any attention to the ethical dimensions of the Israelite’s attitudes toward the Gentiles in the Old Testament especially in the question of dispossession and destruction of indigenous population of the promised land. Even the liberation theologians take the Old Testament as the underpinning of their advocacy waive the perspective of the oppressed Canaanites! Is Yahweh a chauvinistic, nationalistic and militaristic xenophobe in the eyes of Canaanites? Does such a portrait of Yahweh in Old Testament is misappropriated to justify militant mission in Asian and South American countries, Zionism in Palestine or Apartheid in Southern Africa today?

In the covenantal concept of History, as we have seen above *Land* is a significant symbol of Yahweh’s commitment to Israel and is a central theme of Biblical faith. The Hebrew Scriptures support the view that the land of Canaan was promised by God to Abraham and his descendants and that their possession of it was in conformity with his will: “To your descendants I will give this land [Canaan]” (Gen: 12:6-7; see also Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; 17:5-8; 26:3-4; 28:4; 35:12 50:24). The book of Exodus speak of a community of Yahweh, rescued by him from servitude in an alien land and led to the land of promise. Yahweh heard the ‘cry’ of Israel and remembered his covenant (Ex 2:24) and promised: “I have come ... to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:8; see also 6:2-4; 6:6-8; 12:24-25).

Exodus depicts Yahweh as barbarous and blood thirsty tribal God who decimates peoples (Ex 23:27-33; 34:11-15), and encourages the Israelites for the slaughter of the indigenes to occupy the land (Ex 22:21; 23:9). The gift of the land of Canaan is reiterated in the book of Leviticus on the condition of the observance of Yahweh’s statutes (Lev 14:34; 18:1-5; 18). Picturesque description of the bloody killings in the book of Numbers numb our conscience. All this killing spree is done with the mandate from Yahweh. (Num 31:8-16, 18;). The book of Deuteronomy is not an exception in the treatment of land and its inhabitants (Deut 3:3; 7:1ff; 12:2-3;) and Yahweh is depicted as a “devouring fire” who will destroy and dispossess the indigenes for the sake of His people (Deut 9:1-5), the “treasured possession” (see Deut 7:1-11; 20:16-18). The book continues with the theme of the promise of the land to Israelites (Deut 1:30-31; 6:10-15). The book of Joshua

presents Joshua as chosen successor of Moses and he is destined to complete the work of Moses by leading the people to the land of promise. The first major part (2:1-12:24) describes the conquest of the land and laws of the Holy War. Then the chapters 13 to 21 speaks about the division of land. The slaughter of people and destruction of property acquires terrifying proportion under the leadership of Joshua. (see Josh 6:21-27; 10; 11) No one of the 12,000 inhabitants survived in the war for Jerico (Josh 8:2, 19-29). The chapter 12 gives full details of the kings defeated and the lands conquered. The theme of land occurs in several other books of Judges (46:11-12), Isaiah (10:26), Psalms (65:9-13; 78:54-55; 80:8; 105:43-44).

Obviously, the book of Torah has a unique place in the religiosity of the Israelites especially in terms of Hebrew historiography and religiosity. Torah extolls the occupation of another people's land which involves systematic pillage and killing. In the conquest of the promised land such atrocities are portrayed as having divine approval and mandate in this Old Testament canonical book. In the book of Joshua as well, it is reported that Israelites killed in conformity with the directives of God. This kind of presentation of God poses questions regarding the conduct of an ethical God.

The texts like, "You shall devour all the peoples that Yahweh your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity" (Deut 7:16) have been used in support of colonialism in several regions and periods. Indigenous people of the colonized nations are seen as counter parts of the Hittites, and Girgshites. Such biblical sentiments call for racial hatred. *Prima facia* the first six books of the Hebrew Bible approve some ethnocentric, racist and xenophobic ideas and sentiments with a divine approval. Does Torah provide divine legitimacy for the occupation of other people's land and virtual annihilation of the indigenes? The religious concepts like 'the land as God's gift', 'the possession of land as the fulfilment of God's covenantal agreement with the people of Israel', neglect the rights and claims of the indigenes.²⁴ Several different cultures have been victims of a colonialism justified by religious imperialism contained in the Bible, whether in the case of the Indians of North or Latin America, the Maoris in New Zealand, the Aborigines in Australia, the Khoikhoi and San in Southern Africa, or the Palestinians in Palestine.²⁵ A Palestine theologian writes: "Before the creation of the state (Israel), the Old Testament was considered to be an essential part of Christian Scripture, pointing and witnessing to Jesus. Since the creation of the State, some Jewish and Christian interpreters have read the Old Testament largely as a Zionist text to such an extent that it has become almost repugnant to Palestine Christians. The fundamental

question of many Christians, .. 'How can the Old Testament be the Word of God in the light of the Palestinian Christians' experience with its use to support Zionism?'²⁶ A Chinese woman theologian poignantly asks: "Where is the Promised Land now?.. Can I believe in a God who killed the Canaanites and who seems not to have listened to the cry of the Palestinians now for some forty years?"²⁷

Indeed, this biblical paradigm, interpreted in blind literalism, though utterly unacceptable in our time, is verily seen operational, both in the past and the present, whether in the political ideology of Zionism, or in the dispossession of indigenes in Latin America, or in the racial politics of Apartheid in South Africa or in the fundamentalism of Evangelicalism.²⁸ In these cases the Bible is used as an instrument of oppression. What is attempted to drive home here is that ethical concerns should be considered in the evaluation of Hebrew concept of their religious history and their application both in the Old Testament times and modern times.

The Hebrew understanding of history, especially in reference to the theme of *land* has to be 'revisited' in the horizon of New Testament and vision of Jesus Christ. We can find strong reaction to the territorialization of God's promise along with the tendency to eschatologize the theme of land in the New Testament. Paul writes, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20). The letter to the Hebrews speaks of a new earth and new heaven (11:13-15). The Book of Revelation refers to heavenly city (3:12; 21:2, 10). The letter to the Galatians contrasts the heavenly city with the earthly city (4:25-26). The New Testament dispensation which points to the *new earth*, supersedes the Old Testament promise of a bounded land. Jesus Christ does not territorialize salvation in terms of a particular geographical area. He even questions the sacredness of the Jerusalem temple, and worship of God is understood not in terms of "this mountain or that mountain" but in "truth and Spirit" (Jn 4:21). In stead of Promised Land, what Jesus envisions is a new community of brotherhood, service and love, in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all in one in Christ" (Gal 3:28; Rom 10:12). The new community in Jesus has not boundaries, and is spread to the ends of the world. The land is replaced by "reign of God" which cut across the boundaries of caste, creed, culture, language and territories. This enhancement of 'Promised Land' in terms of 'God's Reign' was possible because of the commencement of the New Time in Jesus who replaced Thora. The community of new dispensation moves away from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth ((Luke-Acts). This movement is 'deterritorilization' of the concept of salvation in the Old Testament. In short, Hebrew concept of history of salvation has to be *re-read*, and

needs a new translation in the horizon of God's Reign initiated by Jesus. Otherwise, Old Testament may become an instrument of oppression, and a justification of exploitation in the present politics of religious and cultural fundamentalism.

Conclusion

Hebrew historical consciousness unveiled in the canonical books of the Old Testament is to be reinterpreted to become relevant and competent in the present era. What the present history witnesses, are confluence of cultures and clash of civilization both of which are happening simultaneously. On the one hand religious and cultural fundamentalism obstruct peace process, on the other hand the networking of nations and cultures through the electronic media and globalization create a world community of collaboration and dialogue. For the *re-conception* of idea of the history of the Hebrew civilization Israelites have to invoke their own traditions especially the prophetic traditions which have a universalistic vision and approach. Moreover, the vision unveiled by Jesus is another source for the reinterpretation of their history. If the Israelites do not *re-conceive* their idea of history they will not be able to participate in the present pluralistic and dialogical civilization. Consequently they will be sidelined from the mainstreams of the present history, and will ever remain as an "arrested civilization". Besides, Christianity has to *re-read* radically the Old Testament history in a hermeneutical interface with Jesus' vision so that Old Testament history may acquire ethical and moral validity and legitimacy in the present world community which is deeply sensitive to the issues of human rights and justice.

Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram

Bangalore 29

Foot Notes

- 1 See, Dimont Max, I, *Jews, God and History* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 14-18.
- 2 Abraham settled among them as a resident alien (Gen 15:13; 23:4; Deut.26:5) and purchased a burial lot in their midst (Gen.23). Although the patriarchs were careful not to intermarry with the Canaanites, nonetheless Abraham accepted two secondary wives, Hagar (Gen.16:1-4) and Keturah (Gen.25:1), from the local people. The Canaanite Tamar bore one of the ancestors of King David to the patriarch Judah (Gen.38:12-19, 27-30); Ruth 4:18-22; Mt.1:3).

- 3 Thomas L.Thompson "Israelite Historiography" in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol 3 (New York: Doubleday,1992):209.
- 4 See. R.G.Colling Wood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, 1961), 9-10.
- 5 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University press 1973; Barstad .H., "History and Hebrew Bible," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series* 245(1997):43; Averil Cameron, ed., *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (London: Gerald Duckworth., 1989). *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 209f.
- 6 A.D. H. Mayes, "Historiography in the Old Testament" in John Barton, ed. *The Biblical World*, vol. I (London, New York: Routledges, 2002): 66..
- 7 Huizinga J., "A Definition of the Concept of History," in R. Klibansky and H. J. Patton eds., *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 9., *ibid.*, 67
- 8 See, A.M.Mundadan, *History and Beyond* (Aluva: Jeevass Publications, 1997), 34.
- 9 Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 51ff.
- 10 Albert Nolan, *Jesus Christ Before Christianity, The Gospel of Liberation* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), 74.
- 11 See Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 81
- 12 Id, 81ff
- 13 Id, 82
- 14 See, Albert Nolan, *Jesus Christ Before Christianity, The Gospel of Liberation* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977) 75ff.
- 15 See, von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 78ff
- 16 Gerhard Von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburg: Oliver & Boyd,1966),1ff in *Biblical World*, 74.
- 17 von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 83.
- 18 Richardson, *History Sacred and Profane* (London, 1964), 224 quoted in Mundadan, *History and Beyond*,29.
- 19 Monden L, *Faith: Can Man Still Believe?* (New York, 1970), 95 in *ibid.*, 29.
- 20 von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 92
- 21 See *ibid.*, 88-94
- 22 See von Rad *Message of the Prophets* 100-101, Albert Nolon, *Jesus Before Christianity*, 75-78
- 23 Lonsdale [Lonsdale, J., "States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey", *African Review* 24(1981):140, quoted in Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism, A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 13
- 24 Prior 39
- 25 Prior 34
- 26 Naim Stifan Ateek , "A Palestinian Perspective: The Bible and Liberation" in Sugirtharajah R.S, ed. *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (London: SPCK, 1991), 283. in Prior, 40.
- 27 Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 99. in *Ibid.*, 40.
- 28 See Prior, chs 2, 3 &4.